steve niles

CRIMINAL MACABRE™

the cal mcdonald mysteries

OMNIBUS

VOLUME 2

steve niles

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VOLUME 2

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This volume collects *Criminal Macabre: Two Red Eyes* #1–#4, *Criminal Macabre: Feat of Clay*, *Criminal Macabre: My Demon Baby* #1–#4, *Criminal Macabre: Cell Block 666* #1–#4, "Hairball" from *Dark Horse Presents* #102–#105, and "The Creepy Tree" and "The Trouble with Brains" from *MySpace Dark Horse Presents*.

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BLACK CAT Club

Cal McDonald saw his first dead body when he was eight years old—a headless corpse rotting in an embankment—setting the tone for the rest of his life. Cal shares company with the ghoul community, an undead society that aids him in his cases as a private dick. A pill-popping, alcoholic degenerate, teamed up with his ghoul associate, Mo'Lock, Cal is up against a growing horde of monsters. After following a living head from his old haunt of Washington, DC, to the sin-infested streets of LA, Cal and his army of the undead are ready to blast every single werewolf, demon, occultist, and vampire back to fuckin' hell!

BLACK CAT
Club

HAIRBALL

JONES/PATTERSON
Calvin

story
STEVE NILES

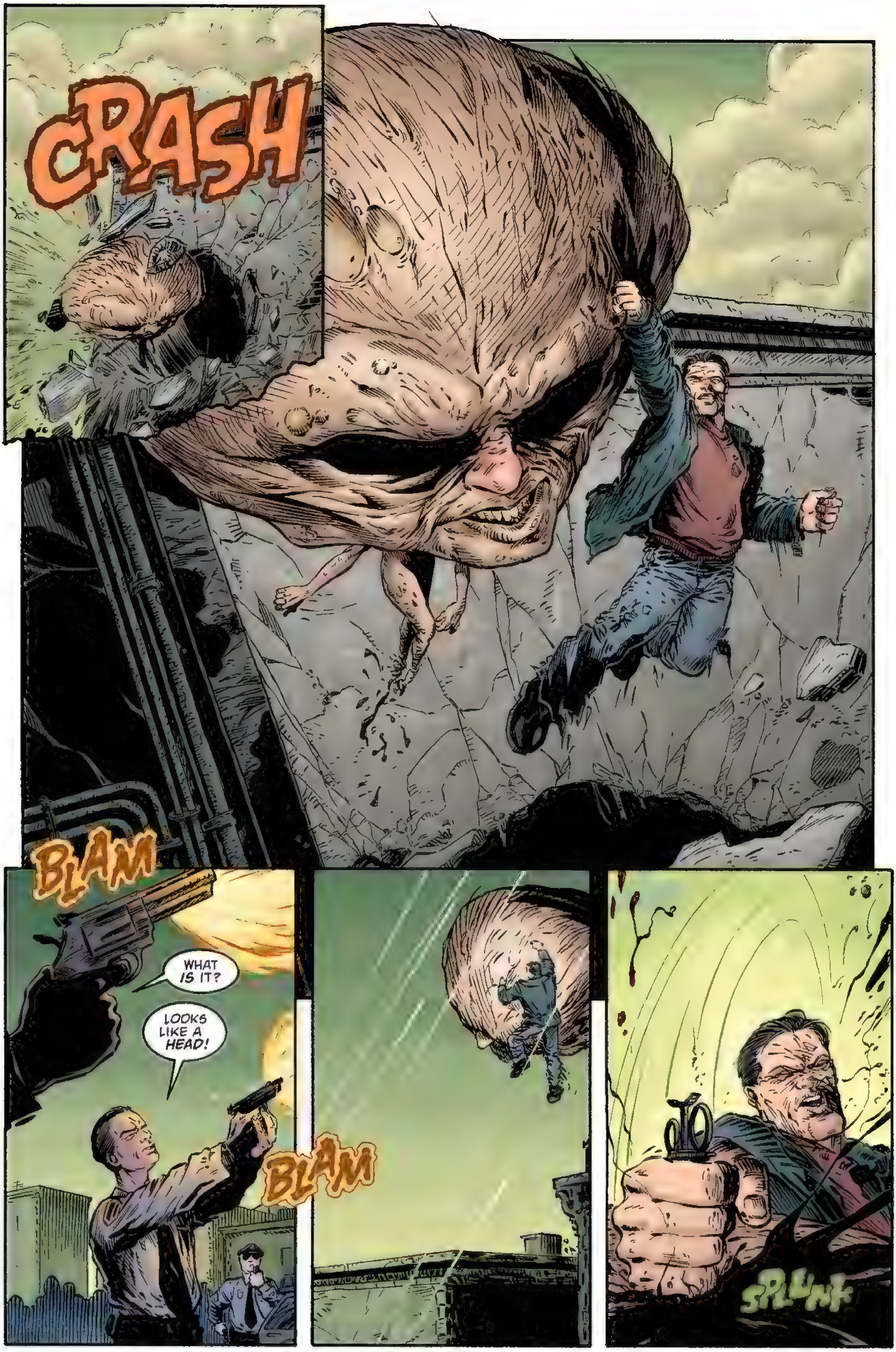
pencils
CASEY JONES

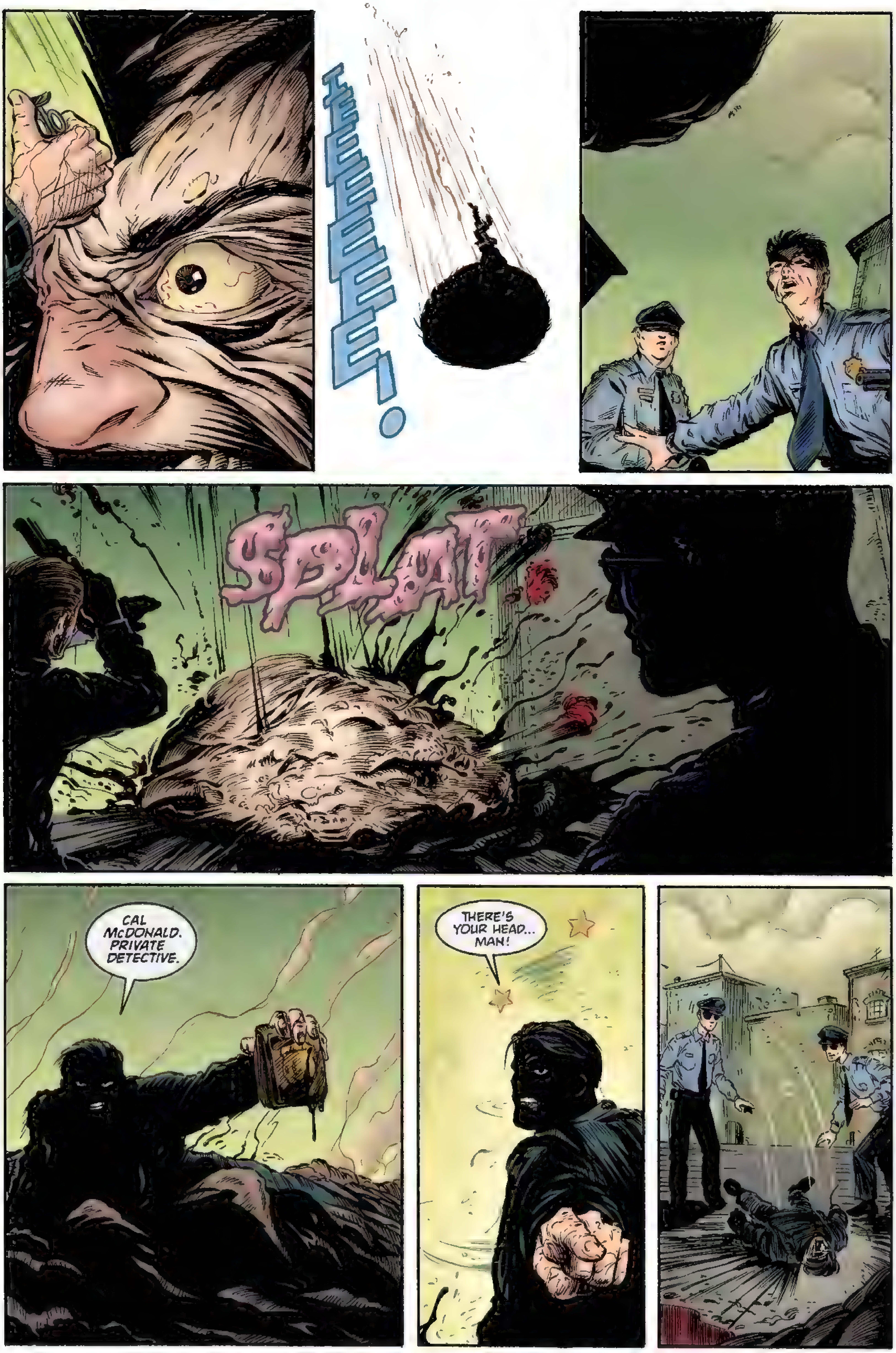
inks
BRUCE PATTERSON

colors
MICHELLE MADSEN

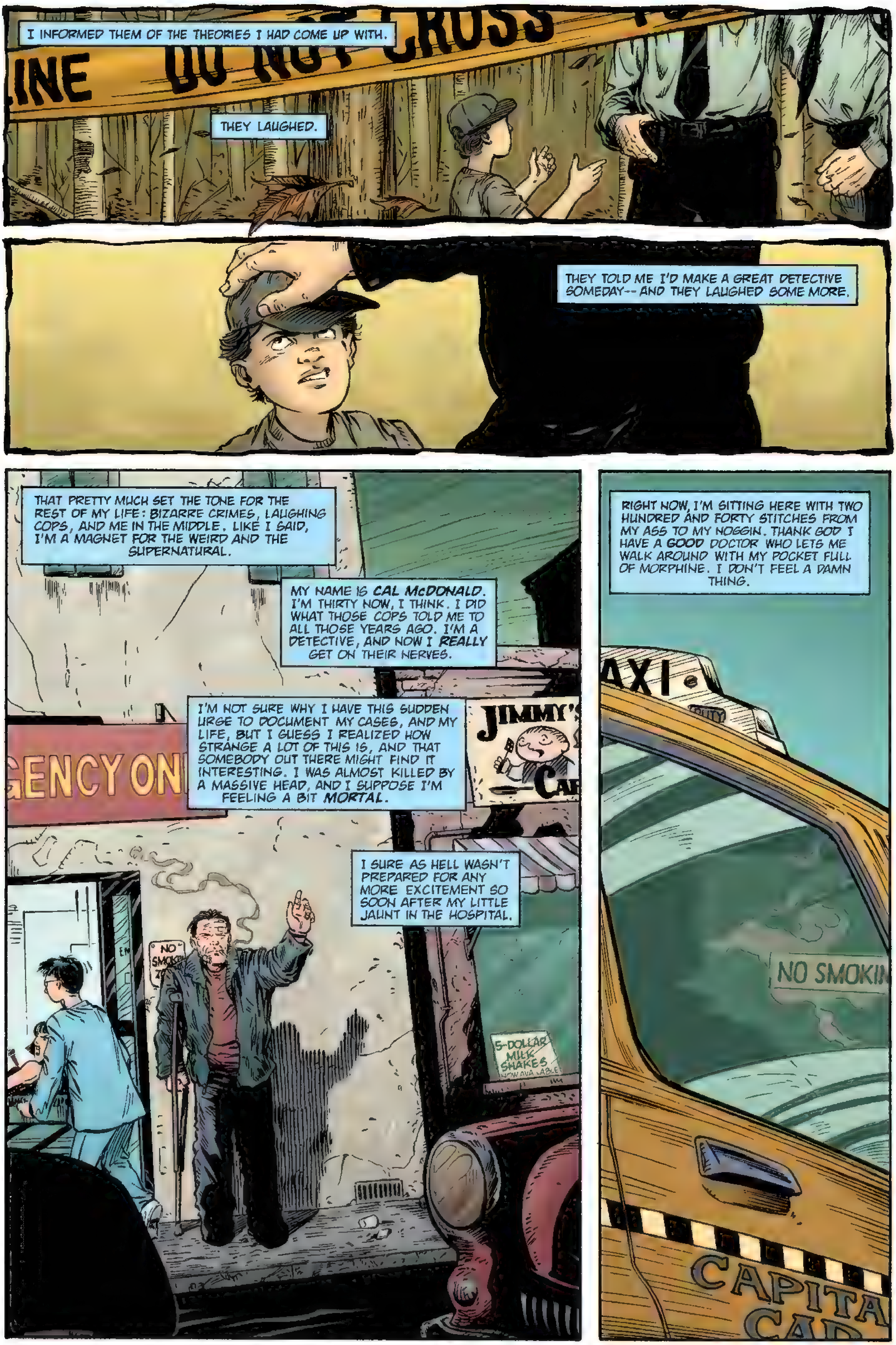
letters
SEAN KONOT

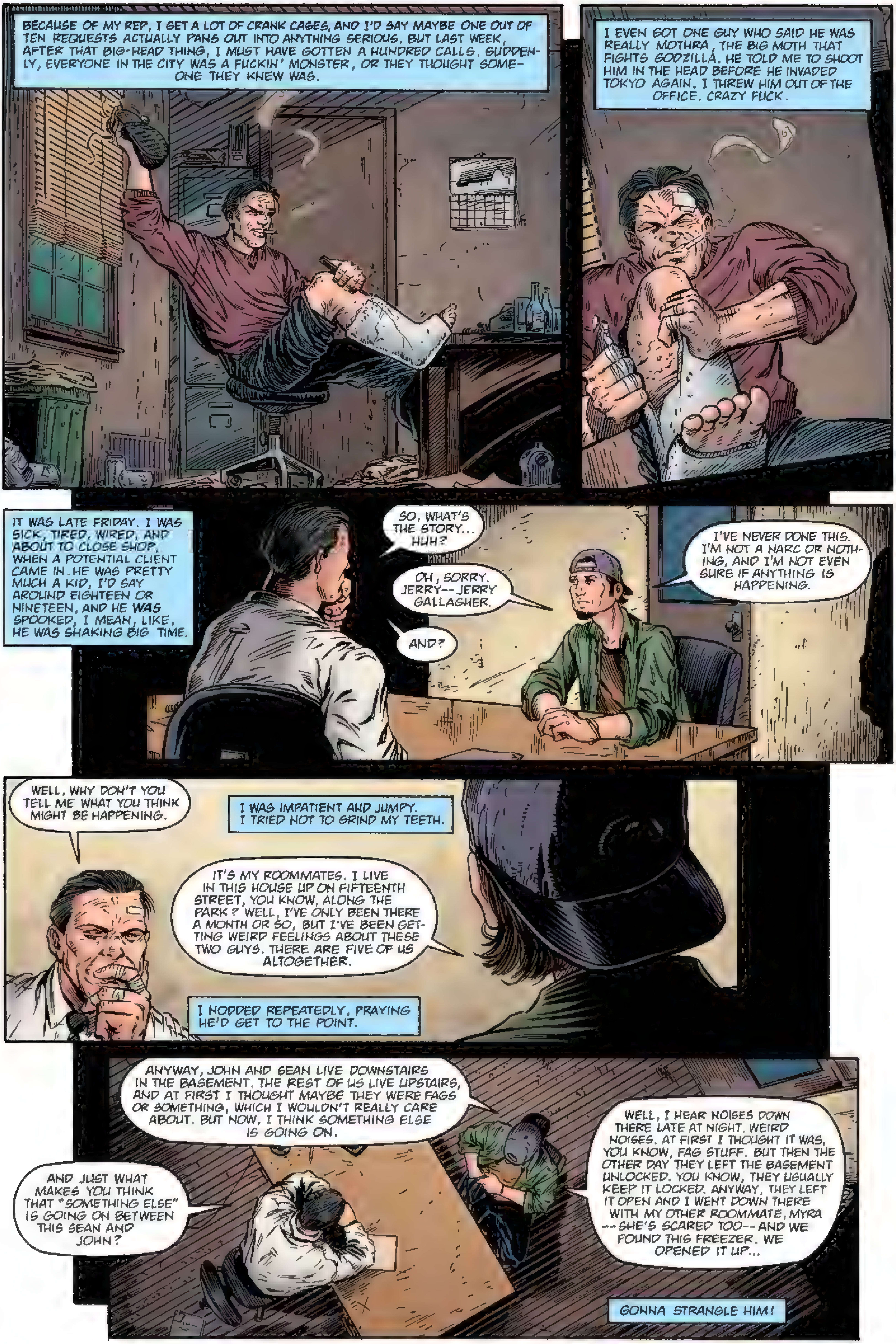
BLACK CAT Club

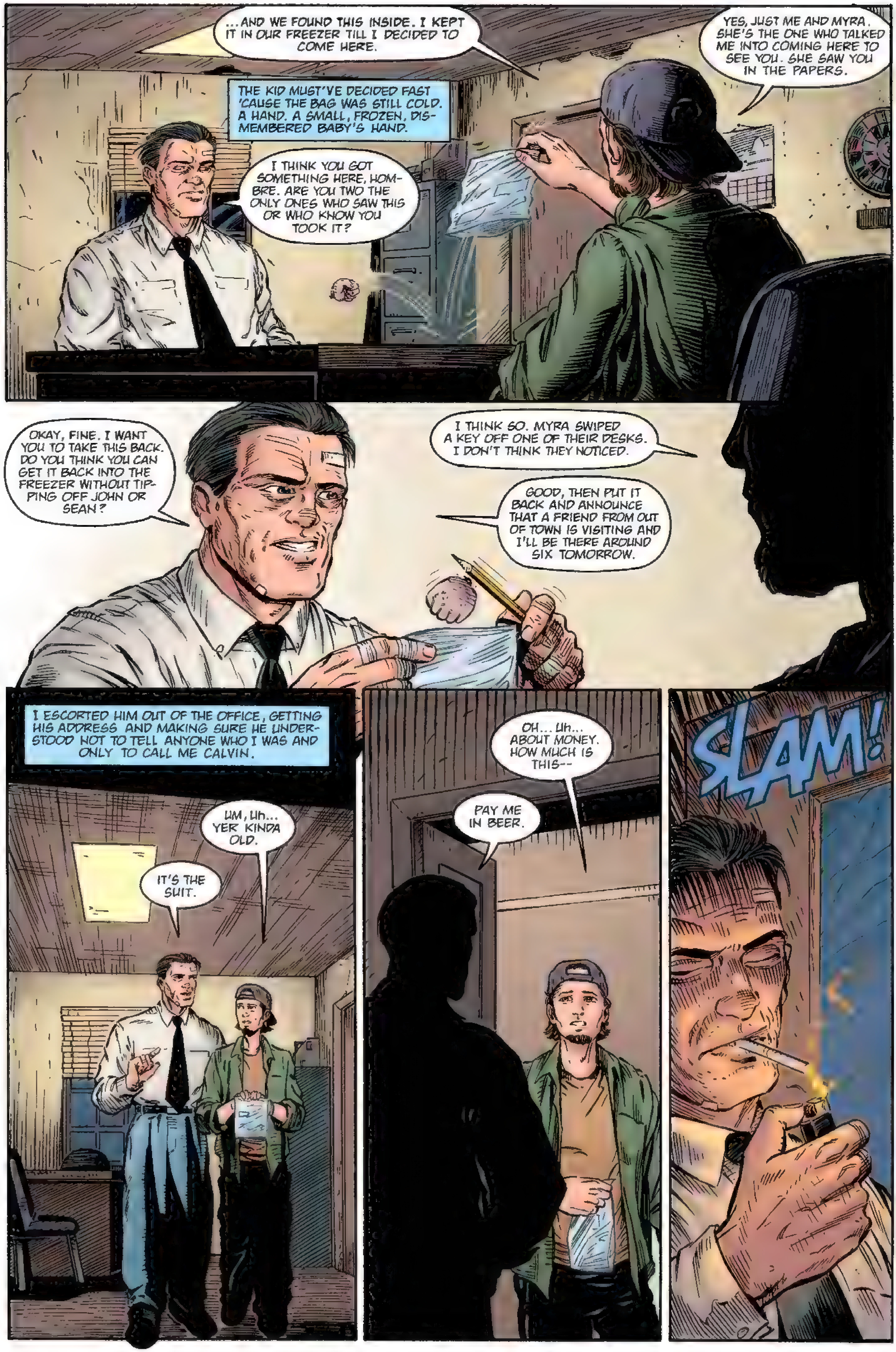

CRASH
BLAM
WHAT IS IT?
LOOKS LIKE A HEAD!
BLAM
SPLUNK

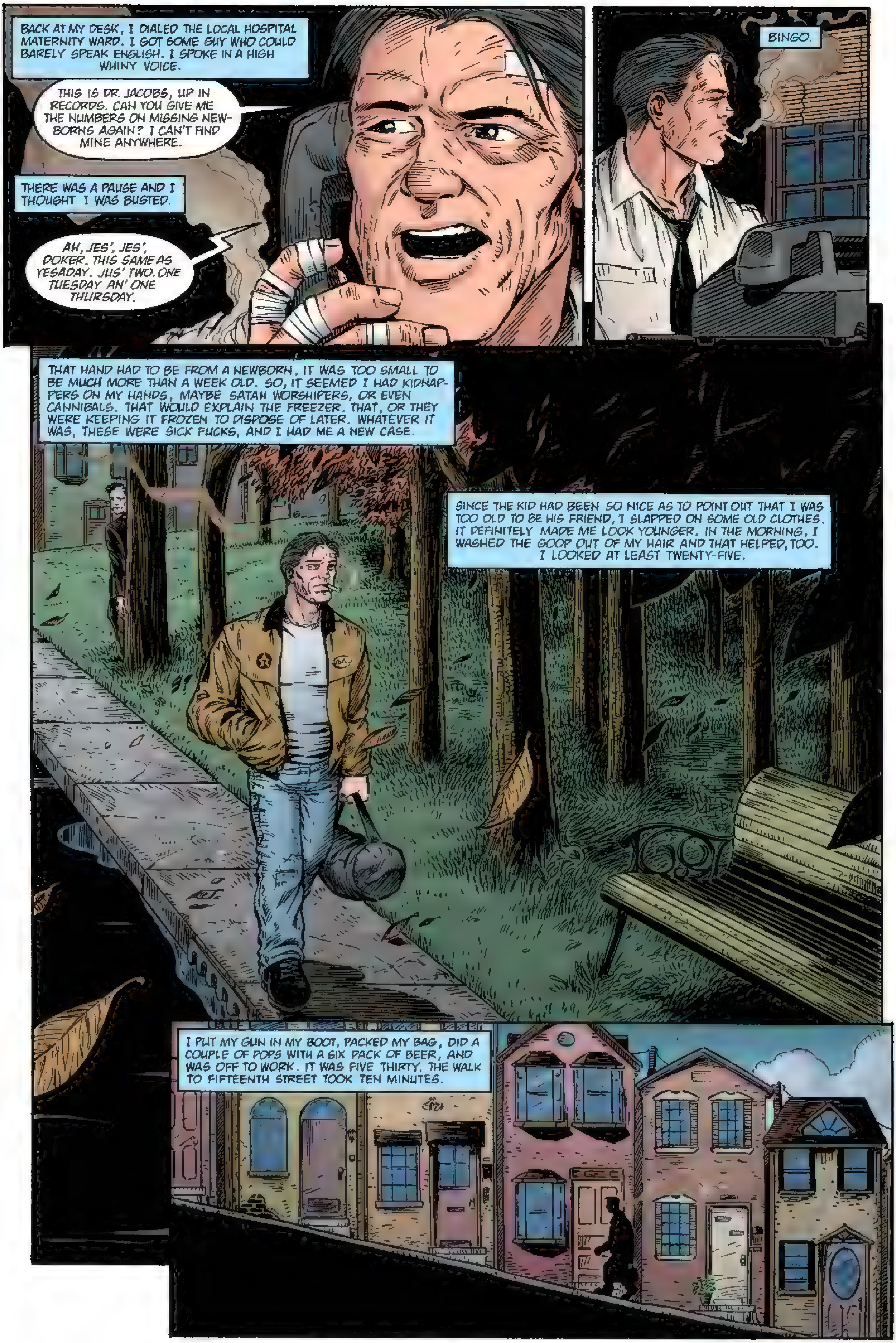

IEEEEE!
SPLAT
CAL McDONALD. PRIVATE DETECTIVE.
THERE'S YOUR HEAD... MAN!

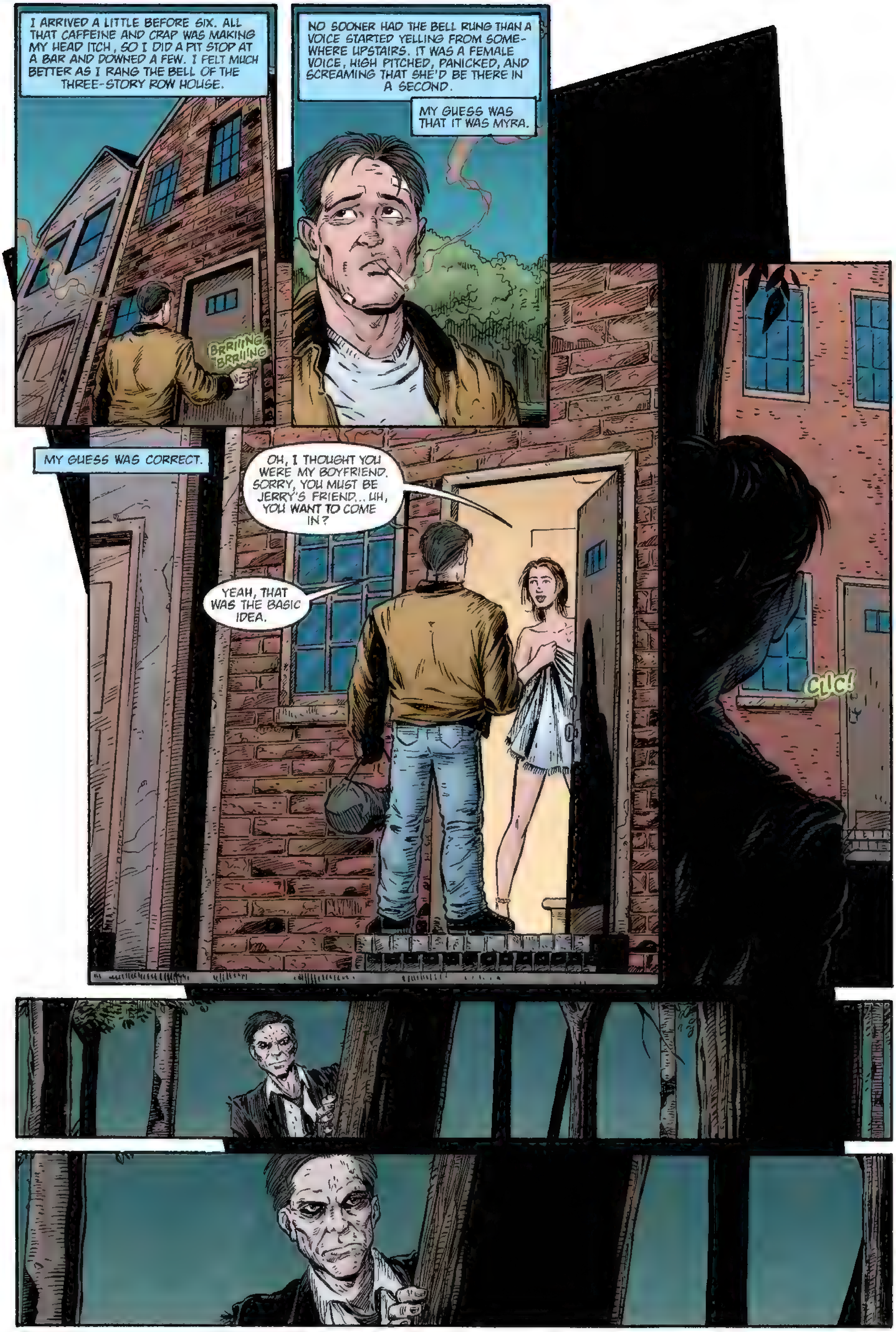
CERTAINLY, IT CAN BE SAID THAT PEOPLE ARE ATTRACTORS, MEANING THAT DIFFERENT PEOPLE ATTRACT DIFFERENT THINGS. SOME SEEM TO HAVE UNDENIABLE GOOD LUCK WHILE OTHERS-- AND I MIGHT FIT INTO THIS GROUP-- LIVE AN ENDLESS STREAM OF DISASTERS.
SOME PEOPLE ATTRACT LOVE, MONEY, GOOD WEATHER, OR BAD WEATHER, AND SOME, LIKE ME, ATTRACT THE BIZARRE.
I ALWAYS HAVE, EVER SINCE I WAS A KID.
EVER SINCE I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD, LIVING IN THE BURBS, WHEN I FOUND THAT *CORPSE*.
THERE *I* WAS, TOOLING AROUND IN THE WOODS, PLAYING WITH STICKS AND CRAP, WHEN I CAME OVER AN EMBANKMENT NEAR THE CREEK THAT RAN PARALLEL WITH MY HOUSE. AND THERE *IT* WAS.
I SAW ITS FEET FIRST-- THEN ITS TORSO, AND THAT WAS ALL. BECAUSE THAT WAS ALL THERE WAS. MAYBE THAT WAS WHEN THINGS CLICKED. MAYBE THAT'S WHEN MY FATE WAS SET. I WASN'T SCARED. I WAS ENTHRALLED. I WAS THERE AN HOUR BEFORE I RAN HOME TO TELL MOM TO CALL THE COPS.
WHO WAS HE? WHY WAS HE DEAD? WHO HAD KILLED HIM, AND WHY HAD THEY TAKEN HIS HEAD? SOMEHOW I *KNEW* THAT THE HEAD WAS NOWHERE IN THE AREA.

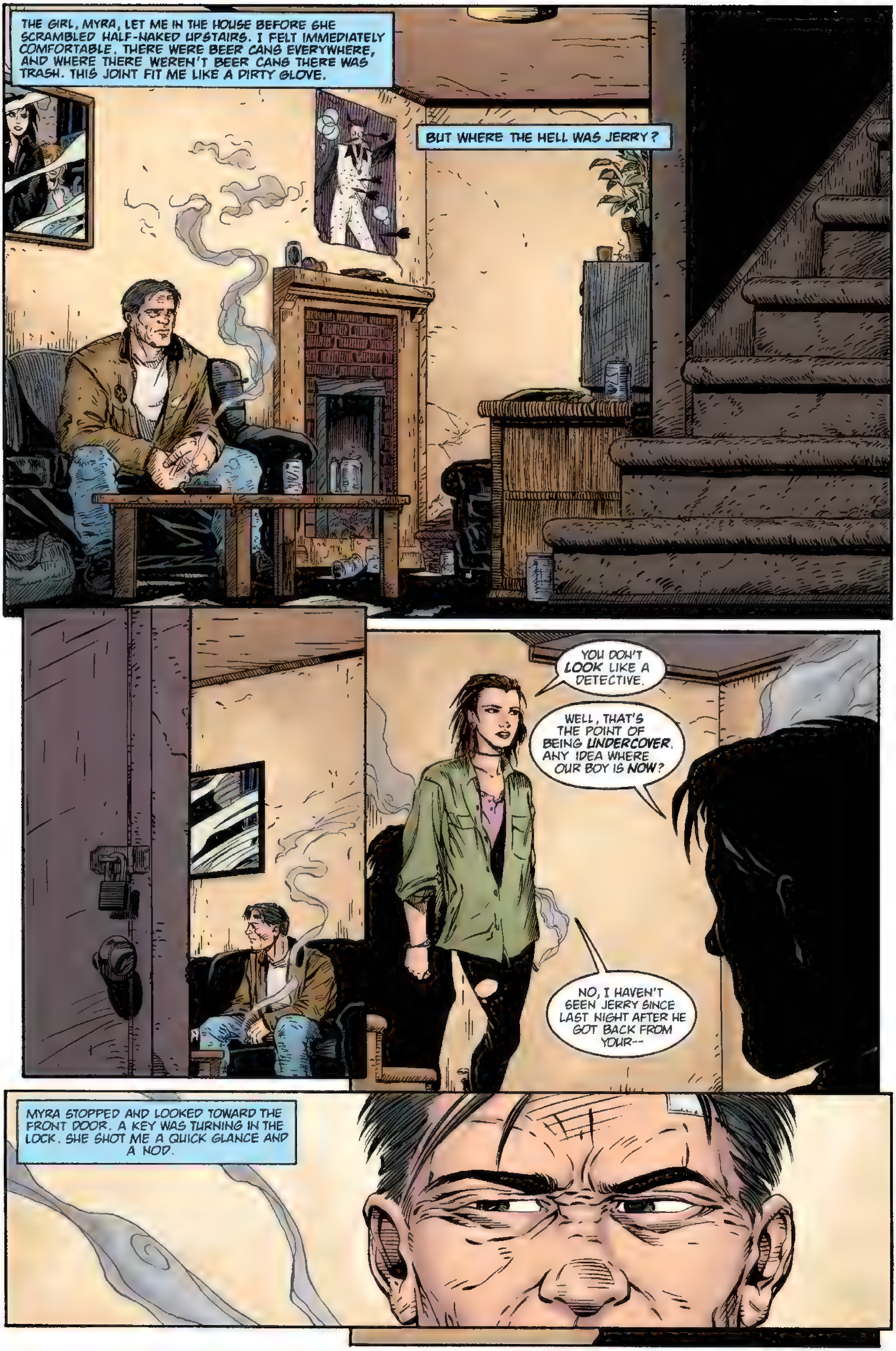

LINE DO NOT CROSS
I INFORMED THEM OF THE THEORIES I HAD COME UP WITH.
THEY LAUGHED.
THEY TOLD ME I'D MAKE A GREAT DETECTIVE SOMEDAY-- AND THEY LAUGHED SOME MORE.
THAT PRETTY MUCH SET THE TONE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE: BIZARRE CRIMES, LAUGHING COPS, AND ME IN THE MIDDLE. LIKE I SAID, I'M A MAGNET FOR THE WEIRD AND THE SUPERNATURAL.
MY NAME IS **CAL McDONALD**. I'M THIRTY NOW, I THINK. I DID WHAT THOSE COPS TOLD ME TO ALL THOSE YEARS AGO. I'M A DETECTIVE, AND NOW I ***REALLY*** GET ON THEIR NERVES.
I'M NOT SURE WHY I HAVE THIS SUDDEN URGE TO DOCUMENT MY CASES, AND MY LIFE, BUT I GUESS I REALIZED HOW STRANGE A LOT OF THIS IS, AND THAT SOMEBODY OUT THERE MIGHT FIND IT INTERESTING. I WAS ALMOST KILLED BY A MASSIVE HEAD, AND I SUPPOSE I'M FEELING A BIT ***MORTAL***.
I SURE AS HELL WASN'T PREPARED FOR ANY MORE EXCITEMENT SO SOON AFTER MY LITTLE JAUNT IN THE HOSPITAL.
GENCY ON
JIMMY'S
NO SMOK
5-DOLLAR MILK SHAKES NOW AVAILABLE
RIGHT NOW, I'M SITTING HERE WITH TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY STITCHES FROM MY ASS TO MY NOGGIN. THANK GOD I HAVE A **GOOD** DOCTOR WHO LETS ME WALK AROUND WITH MY POCKET FULL OF MORPHINE. I DON'T FEEL A DAMN THING.
AXI
NO SMOKIN
CAPITA

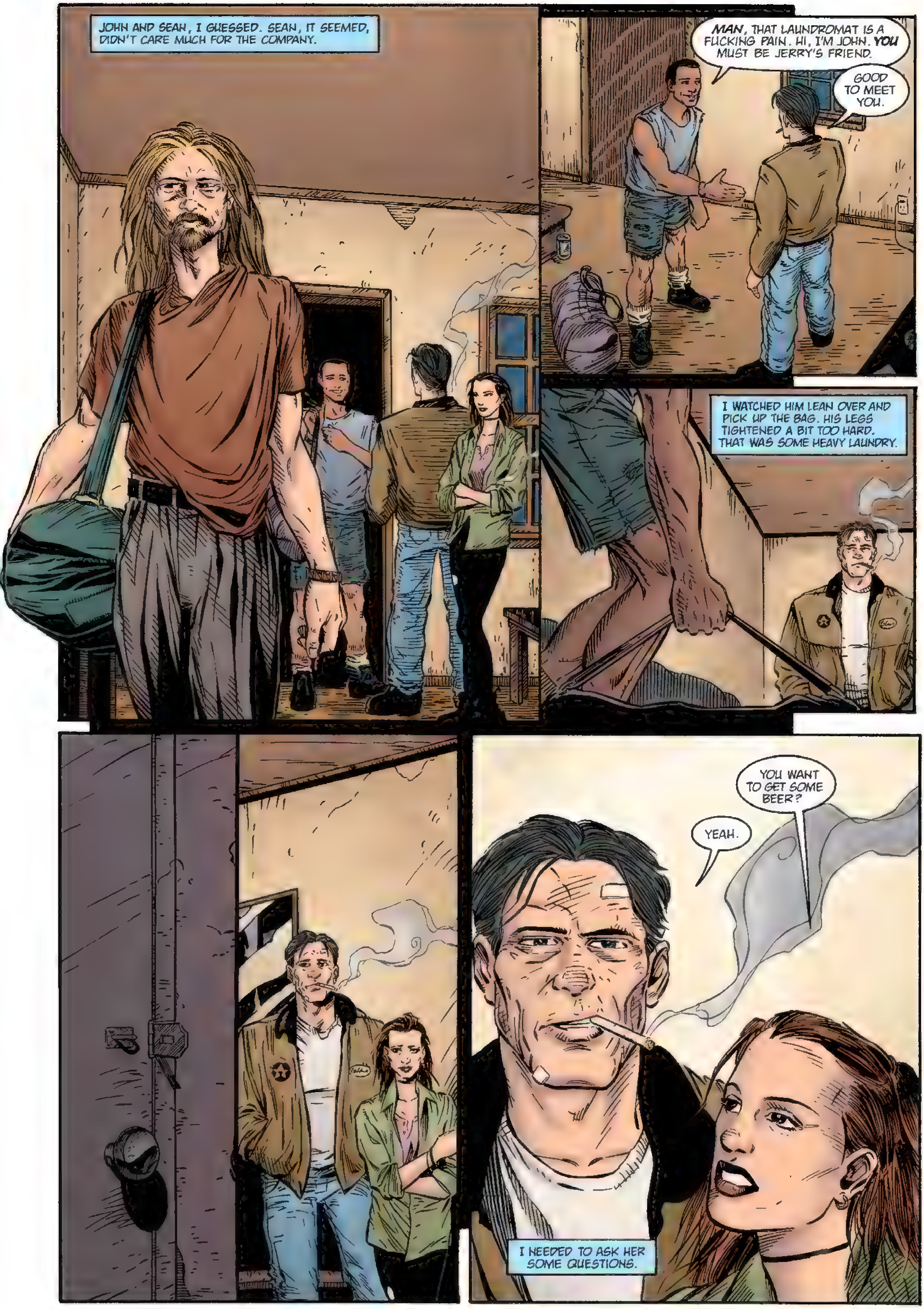

BECAUSE OF MY REP, I GET A LOT OF CRANK CASES, AND I'D SAY MAYBE ONE OUT OF TEN REQUESTS ACTUALLY PANS OUT INTO ANYTHING SERIOUS. BUT LAST WEEK, AFTER THAT BIG-HEAD THING, I MUST HAVE GOTTEN A HUNDRED CALLS. SUDDENLY, EVERYONE IN THE CITY WAS A FUCKIN' MONSTER, OR THEY THOUGHT SOMEONE THEY KNEW WAS.
I EVEN GOT ONE GUY WHO SAID HE WAS REALLY MOTHRA, THE BIG MOTH THAT FIGHTS GODZILLA. HE TOLD ME TO SHOOT HIM IN THE HEAD BEFORE HE INVADED TOKYO AGAIN. I THREW HIM OUT OF THE OFFICE. CRAZY FUCK.
IT WAS LATE FRIDAY. I WAS SICK, TIRED, WIRED, AND ABOUT TO CLOSE SHOP, WHEN A POTENTIAL CLIENT CAME IN. HE WAS PRETTY MUCH A KID, I'D SAY AROUND EIGHTEEN OR NINETEEN, AND HE WAS SPOOKED, I MEAN, LIKE, HE WAS SHAKING BIG TIME.
SO, WHAT'S THE STORY... HUH?
OH, SORRY. JERRY-- JERRY GALLAGHER.
AND?
I'VE NEVER DONE THIS. I'M NOT A NARC OR NOTHING, AND I'M NOT EVEN SURE IF ANYTHING IS HAPPENING.
WELL, WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK MIGHT BE HAPPENING.
I WAS IMPATIENT AND JUMPY. I TRIED NOT TO GRIND MY TEETH.
IT'S MY ROOMMATES. I LIVE IN THIS HOUSE UP ON FIFTEENTH STREET, YOU KNOW, ALONG THE PARK? WELL, I'VE ONLY BEEN THERE A MONTH OR SO, BUT I'VE BEEN GETTING WEIRD FEELINGS ABOUT THESE TWO GUYS. THERE ARE FIVE OF US ALTOGETHER.
I NODDED REPEATEDLY, PRAYING HE'D GET TO THE POINT.
ANYWAY, JOHN AND SEAN LIVE DOWNSTAIRS IN THE BASEMENT. THE REST OF US LIVE UPSTAIRS, AND AT FIRST I THOUGHT MAYBE THEY WERE FAGS OR SOMETHING, WHICH I WOULDN'T REALLY CARE ABOUT. BUT NOW, I THINK SOMETHING ELSE IS GOING ON.
AND JUST WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT "SOMETHING ELSE" IS GOING ON BETWEEN THIS SEAN AND JOHN?
WELL, I HEAR NOISES DOWN THERE LATE AT NIGHT. WEIRD NOISES. AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS, YOU KNOW, FAG STUFF. BUT THEN THE OTHER DAY THEY LEFT THE BASEMENT UNLOCKED. YOU KNOW, THEY USUALLY KEEP IT LOCKED. ANYWAY, THEY LEFT IT OPEN AND I WENT DOWN THERE WITH MY OTHER ROOMMATE, MYRA --SHE'S SCARED TOO-- AND WE FOUND THIS FREEZER. WE OPENED IT UP...
GONNA STRANGLE HIM!

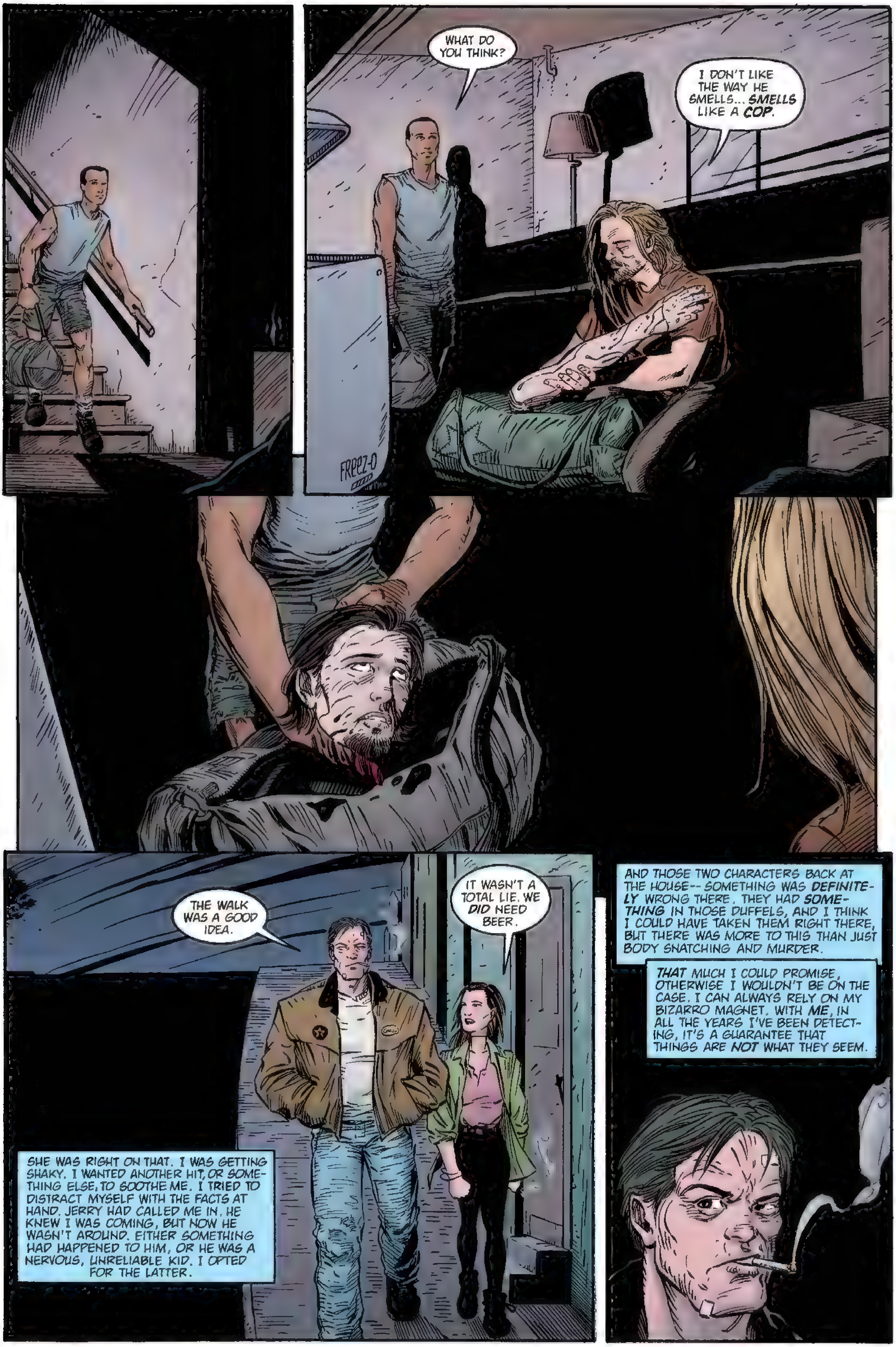

...AND WE FOUND THIS INSIDE. I KEPT IT IN OUR FREEZER TILL I DECIDED TO COME HERE.
THE KID MUST'VE DECIDED FAST 'CAUSE THE BAG WAS STILL COLD. A HAND. A SMALL, FROZEN, DISMEMBERED BABY'S HAND.
I THINK YOU GOT SOMETHING HERE, HOMBRE. ARE YOU TWO THE ONLY ONES WHO SAW THIS OR WHO KNOW YOU TOOK IT?
YES, JUST ME AND MYRA. SHE'S THE ONE WHO TALKED ME INTO COMING HERE TO SEE YOU. SHE SAW YOU IN THE PAPERS.
OKAY, FINE. I WANT YOU TO TAKE THIS BACK. DO YOU THINK YOU CAN GET IT BACK INTO THE FREEZER WITHOUT TIPPING OFF JOHN OR SEAN?
I THINK SO. MYRA SWIPED A KEY OFF ONE OF THEIR DESKS. I DON'T THINK THEY NOTICED.
GOOD, THEN PUT IT BACK AND ANNOUNCE THAT A FRIEND FROM OUT OF TOWN IS VISITING AND I'LL BE THERE AROUND SIX TOMORROW.
I ESCORTED HIM OUT OF THE OFFICE, GETTING HIS ADDRESS AND MAKING SURE HE UNDERSTOOD NOT TO TELL ANYONE WHO I WAS AND ONLY TO CALL ME CALVIN.
UM, UH... YER KINDA OLD.
IT'S THE SUIT.
OH... UH... ABOUT MONEY. HOW MUCH IS THIS--
PAY ME IN BEER.
SLAM!

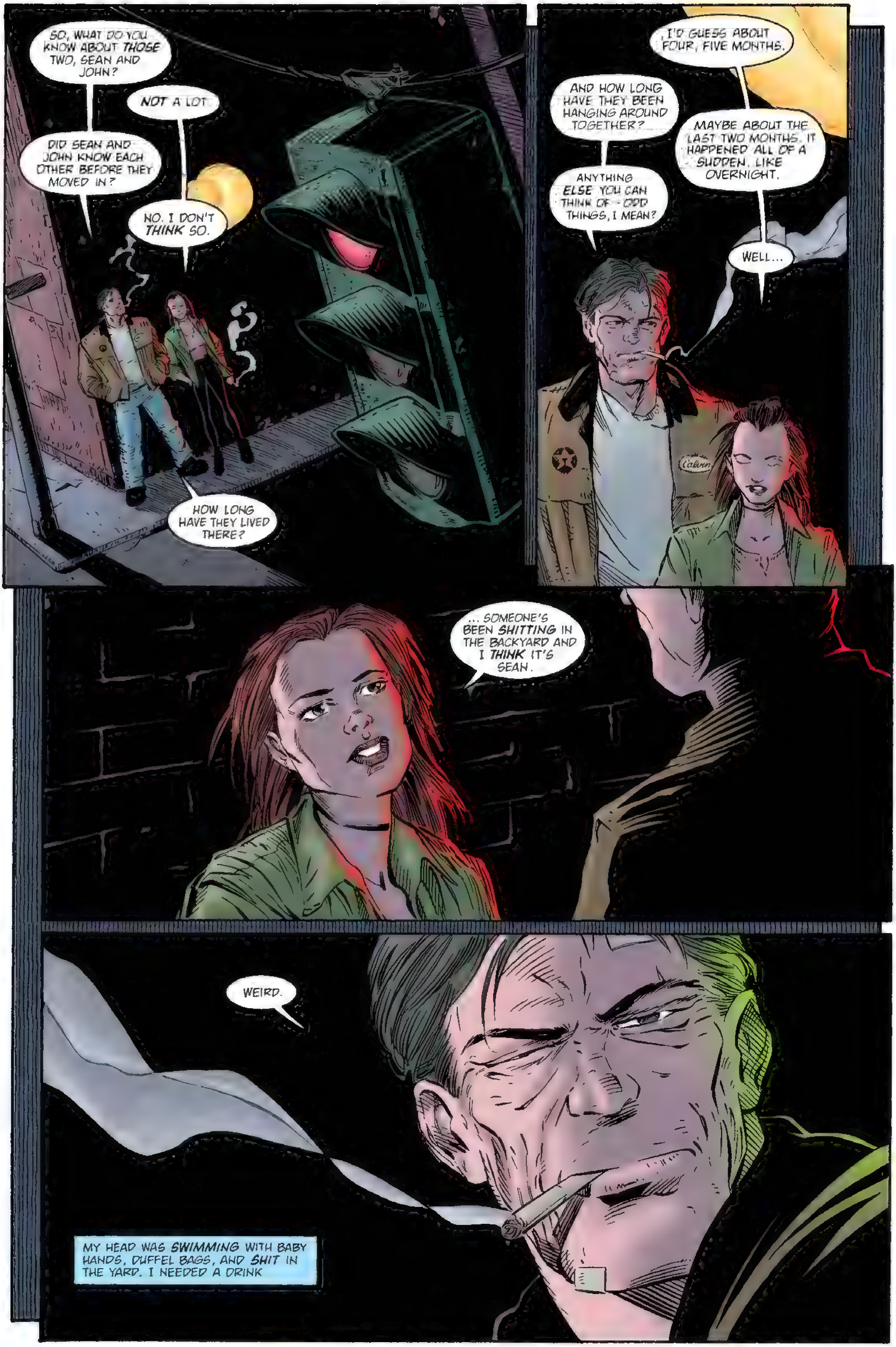

BACK AT MY DESK, I DIALED THE LOCAL HOSPITAL MATERNITY WARD. I GOT SOME GUY WHO COULD BARELY SPEAK ENGLISH. I SPOKE IN A HIGH WHINY VOICE.
THIS IS DR. JACOBS, UP IN RECORDS. CAN YOU GIVE ME THE NUMBERS ON MISSING NEWBORNS AGAIN? I CAN'T FIND MINE ANYWHERE.
THERE WAS A PAUSE AND I THOUGHT I WAS BUSTED.
AH, JES', JES', DOKER. THIS SAME AS YESADAY. JUS' TWO. ONE TUESDAY AN' ONE THURSDAY.
BINGO.
THAT HAND HAD TO BE FROM A NEWBORN. IT WAS TOO SMALL TO BE MUCH MORE THAN A WEEK OLD. SO, IT SEEMED I HAD KIDNAPPERS ON MY HANDS, MAYBE SATAN WORSHIPERS, OR EVEN CANNIBALS. THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THE FREEZER. THAT, OR THEY WERE KEEPING IT FROZEN TO DISPOSE OF LATER. WHATEVER IT WAS, THESE WERE SICK FUCKS, AND I HAD ME A NEW CASE.
SINCE THE KID HAD BEEN SO NICE AS TO POINT OUT THAT I WAS TOO OLD TO BE HIS FRIEND, I SLAPPED ON SOME OLD CLOTHES. IT DEFINITELY MADE ME LOOK YOUNGER. IN THE MORNING, I WASHED THE GOOP OUT OF MY HAIR AND THAT HELPED, TOO. I LOOKED AT LEAST TWENTY-FIVE.
I PUT MY GUN IN MY BOOT, PACKED MY BAG, DID A COUPLE OF POPS WITH A SIX PACK OF BEER, AND WAS OFF TO WORK. IT WAS FIVE THIRTY. THE WALK TO FIFTEENTH STREET TOOK TEN MINUTES.

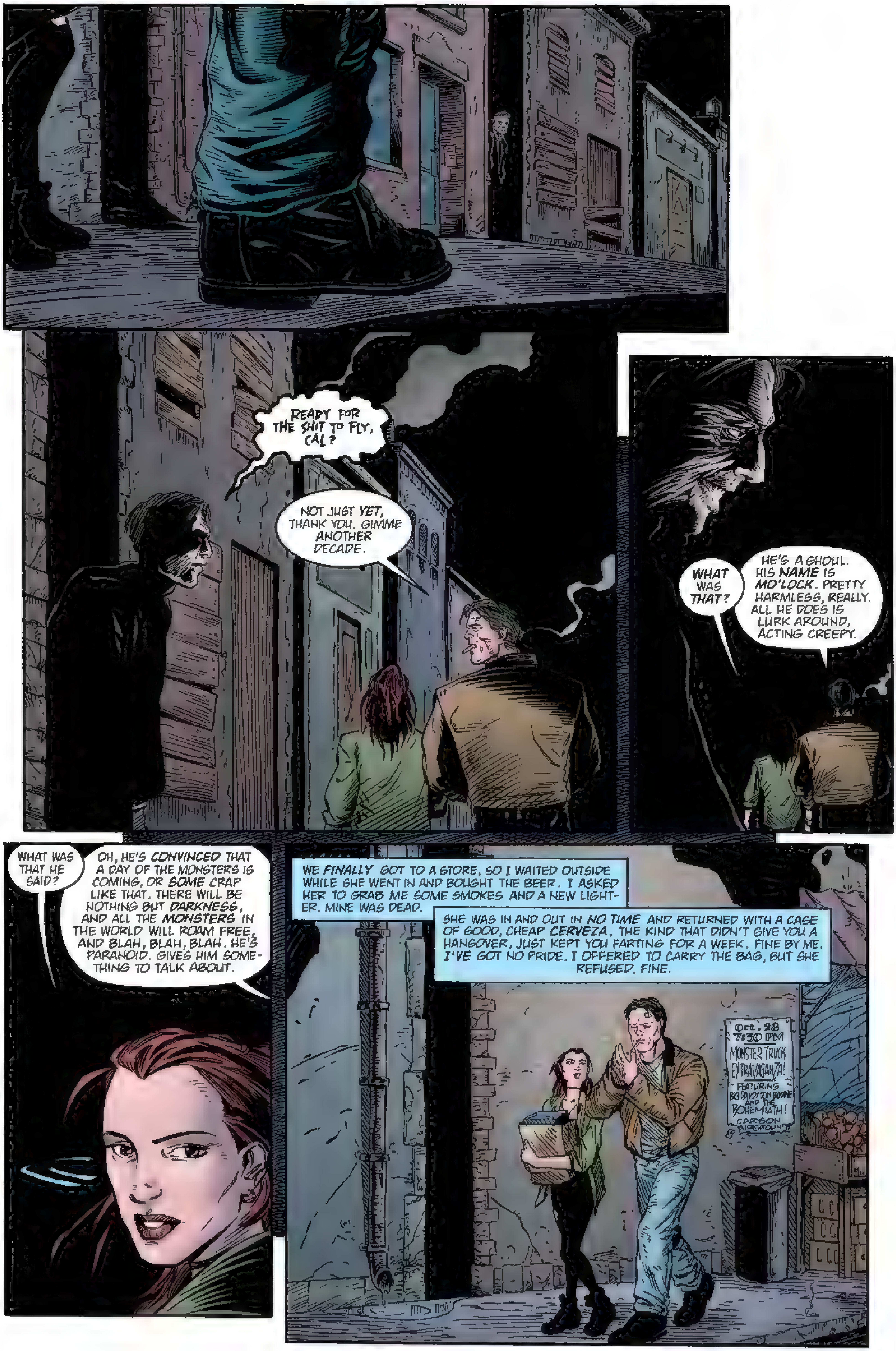

I ARRIVED A LITTLE BEFORE SIX. ALL THAT CAFFEINE AND CRAP WAS MAKING MY HEAD ITCH, SO I DID A PIT STOP AT A BAR AND DOWNED A FEW. I FELT MUCH BETTER AS I RANG THE BELL OF THE THREE-STORY ROW HOUSE.
BRRIIING BRRIIING
NO SOONER HAD THE BELL RUNG THAN A VOICE STARTED YELLING FROM SOMEWHERE UPSTAIRS. IT WAS A FEMALE VOICE, HIGH PITCHED, PANICKED, AND SCREAMING THAT SHE'D BE THERE IN A SECOND.
MY GUESS WAS THAT IT WAS MYRA.
MY GUESS WAS CORRECT.
OH, I THOUGHT YOU WERE MY BOYFRIEND. SORRY, YOU MUST BE JERRY'S FRIEND... UH, YOU WANT TO COME IN?
YEAH, THAT WAS THE BASIC IDEA.
CLIC!

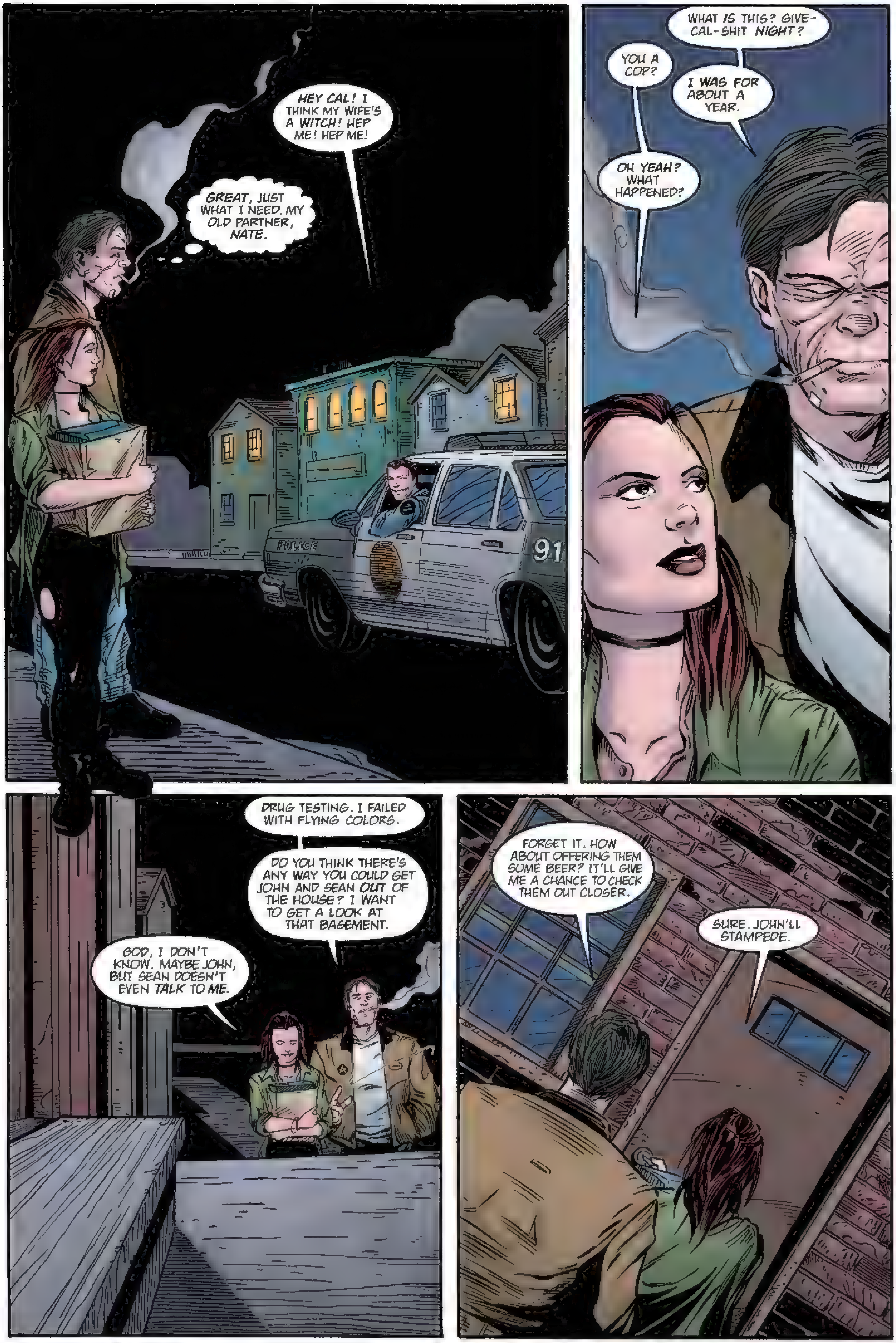

THE GIRL, MYRA, LET ME IN THE HOUSE BEFORE SHE SCRAMBLED HALF-NAKED UPSTAIRS. I FELT IMMEDIATELY COMFORTABLE. THERE WERE BEER CANS EVERYWHERE, AND WHERE THERE WEREN'T BEER CANS THERE WAS TRASH. THIS JOINT FIT ME LIKE A DIRTY GLOVE.
BUT WHERE THE HELL WAS JERRY?
YOU DON'T *LOOK* LIKE A DETECTIVE.
WELL, THAT'S THE POINT OF BEING ***UNDERCOVER***. ANY IDEA WHERE OUR BOY IS *NOW*?
NO, I HAVEN'T SEEN JERRY SINCE LAST NIGHT AFTER HE GOT BACK FROM YOUR--
MYRA STOPPED AND LOOKED TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR. A KEY WAS TURNING IN THE LOCK. SHE SHOT ME A QUICK GLANCE AND A NOD.

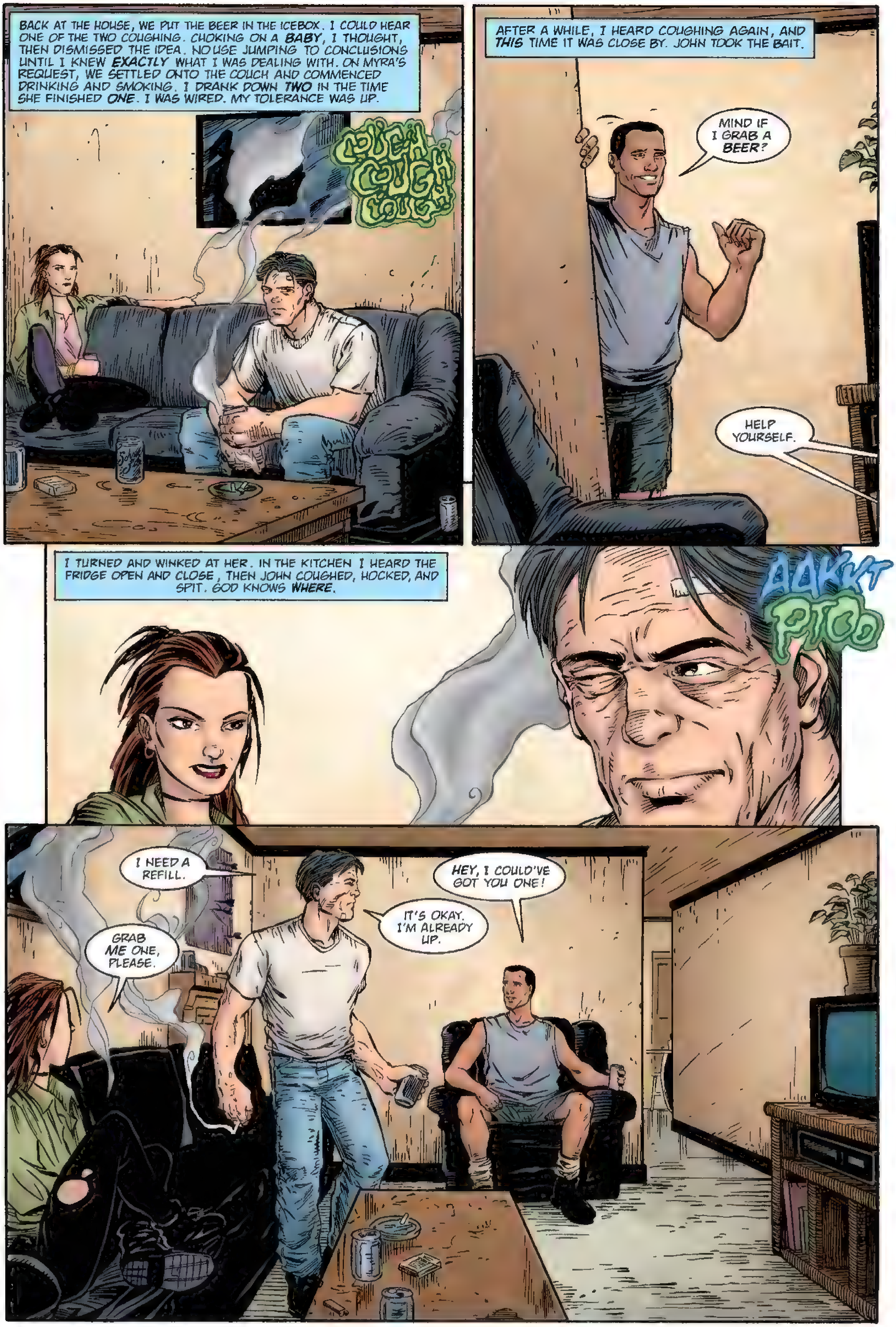

JOHN AND SEAN, I GUESSED. SEAN, IT SEEMED, DIDN'T CARE MUCH FOR THE COMPANY.
MAN, THAT LAUNDROMAT IS A FUCKING PAIN. HI, I'M JOHN. ***YOU*** MUST BE JERRY'S FRIEND.
GOOD TO MEET YOU.
I WATCHED HIM LEAN OVER AND PICK UP THE BAG. HIS LEGS TIGHTENED A BIT TOO HARD. THAT WAS SOME HEAVY LAUNDRY.
YOU WANT TO GET SOME BEER?
YEAH.
I NEEDED TO ASK HER SOME QUESTIONS.

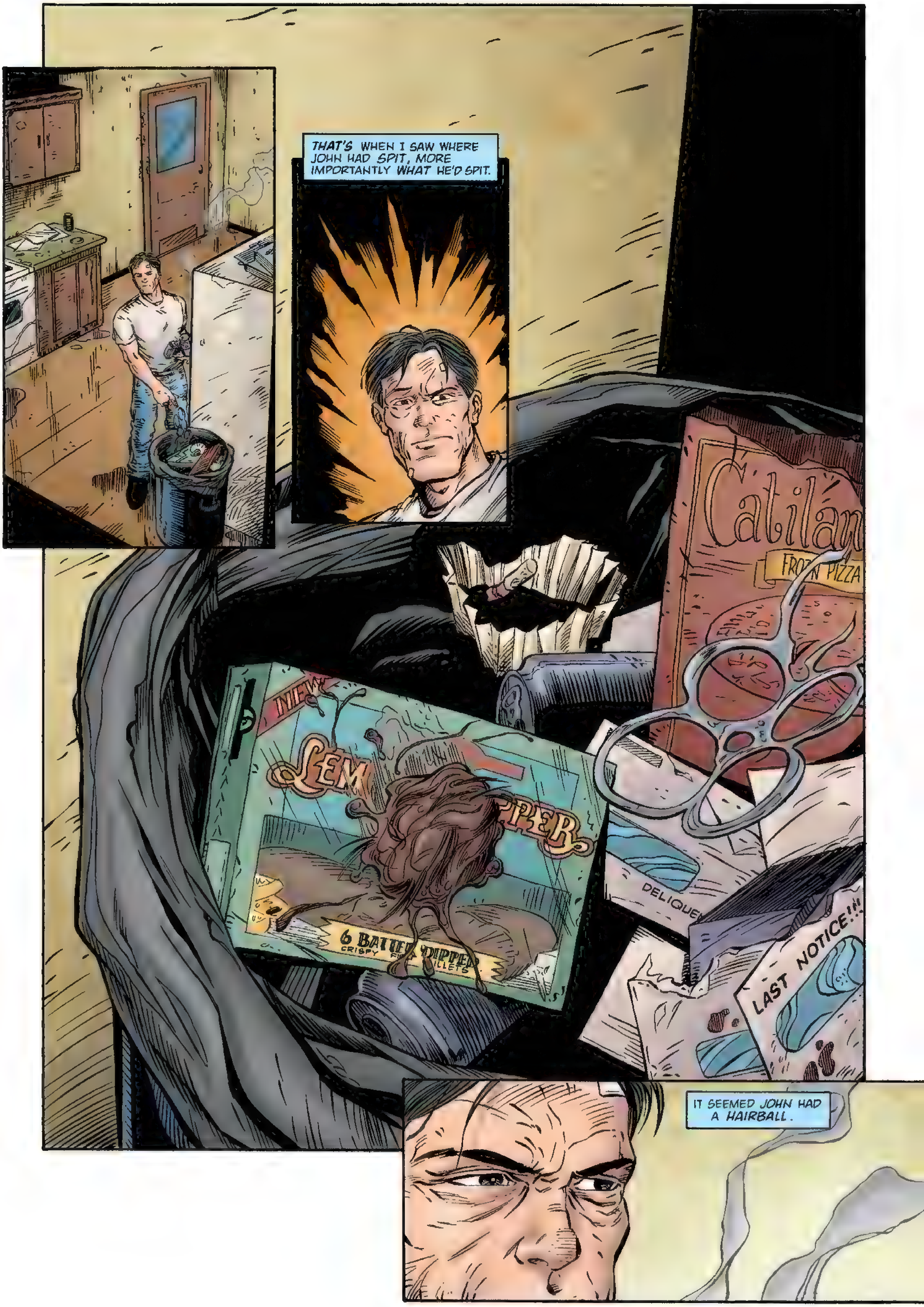

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I DON'T LIKE THE WAY HE SMELLS... **SMELLS** LIKE A **COP**.
FREEZ-O
THE WALK WAS A GOOD IDEA.
IT WASN'T A TOTAL LIE. WE **DID** NEED BEER.
SHE WAS RIGHT ON THAT. I WAS GETTING SHAKY. I WANTED ANOTHER HIT, OR SOMETHING ELSE, TO SOOTHE ME. I TRIED TO DISTRACT MYSELF WITH THE FACTS AT HAND. JERRY HAD CALLED ME IN. HE KNEW I WAS COMING, BUT NOW HE WASN'T AROUND. EITHER SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO HIM, OR HE WAS A NERVOUS, UNRELIABLE KID. I OPTED FOR THE LATTER.
AND THOSE TWO CHARACTERS BACK AT THE HOUSE-- SOMETHING WAS **DEFINITELY** WRONG THERE. THEY HAD **SOMETHING** IN THOSE DUFFELS, AND I THINK I COULD HAVE TAKEN THEM RIGHT THERE, BUT THERE WAS MORE TO THIS THAN JUST BODY SNATCHING AND MURDER.
THAT MUCH I COULD PROMISE, OTHERWISE I WOULDN'T BE ON THE CASE. I CAN ALWAYS RELY ON MY BIZARRO MAGNET. WITH **ME**, IN ALL THE YEARS I'VE BEEN DETECTING, IT'S A GUARANTEE THAT THINGS ARE **NOT** WHAT THEY SEEM.

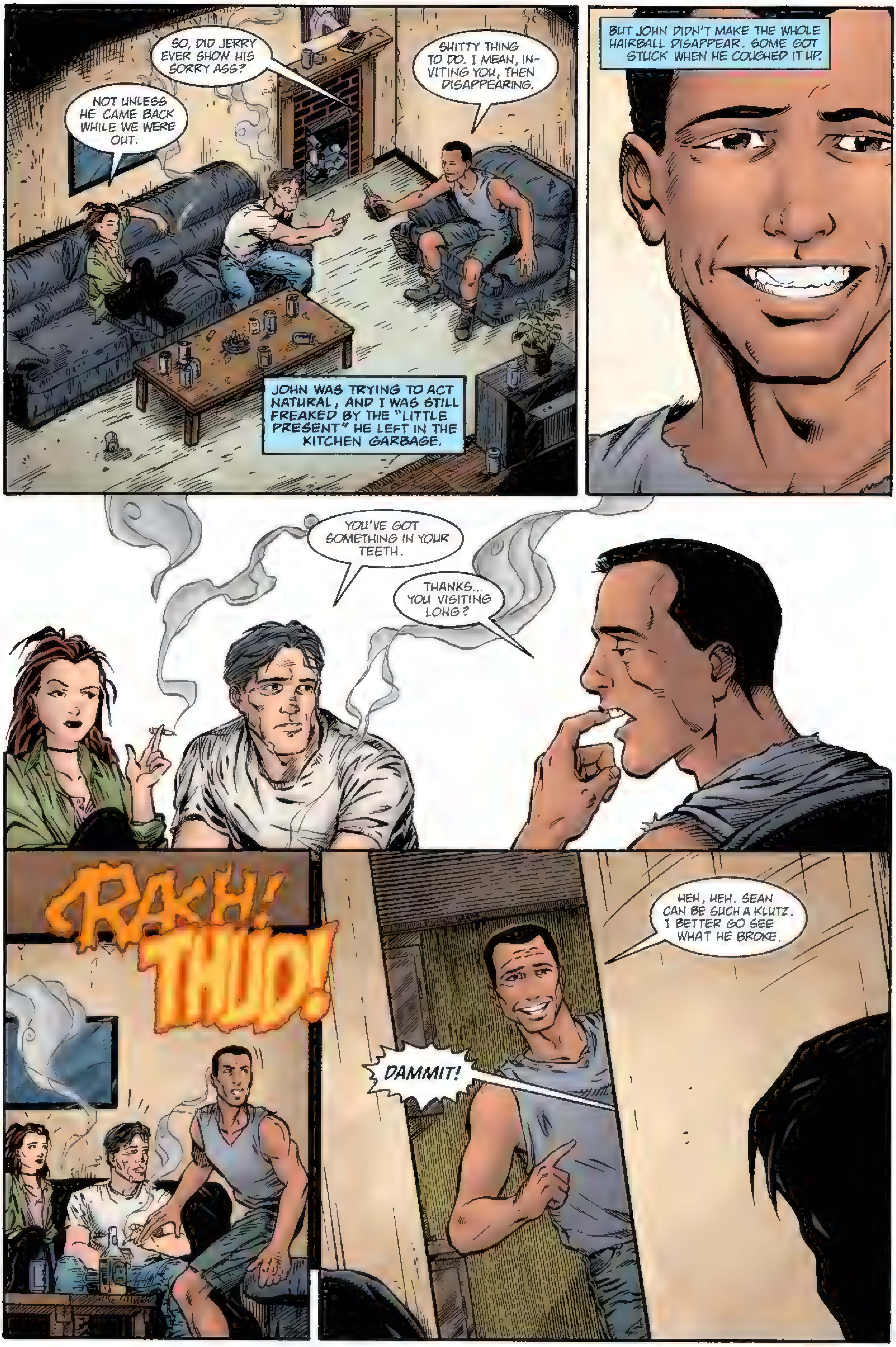

SO, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT *THOSE* TWO, SEAN AND JOHN?
NOT A LOT.
DID SEAN AND JOHN KNOW EACH OTHER BEFORE THEY MOVED IN?
NO. I DON'T *THINK* SO.
HOW LONG HAVE THEY LIVED THERE?
I'D GUESS ABOUT FOUR, FIVE MONTHS.
AND HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN HANGING AROUND TOGETHER?
MAYBE ABOUT THE LAST TWO MONTHS. IT HAPPENED ALL OF A SUDDEN, LIKE OVERNIGHT.
ANYTHING *ELSE* YOU CAN THINK OF -- ODD THINGS, I MEAN?
WELL...
... SOMEONE'S BEEN *SHITTING* IN THE BACKYARD AND I *THINK* IT'S SEAN.
WEIRD.
MY HEAD WAS *SWIMMING* WITH BABY HANDS, DUFFEL BAGS, AND *SHIT* IN THE YARD. I NEEDED A DRINK

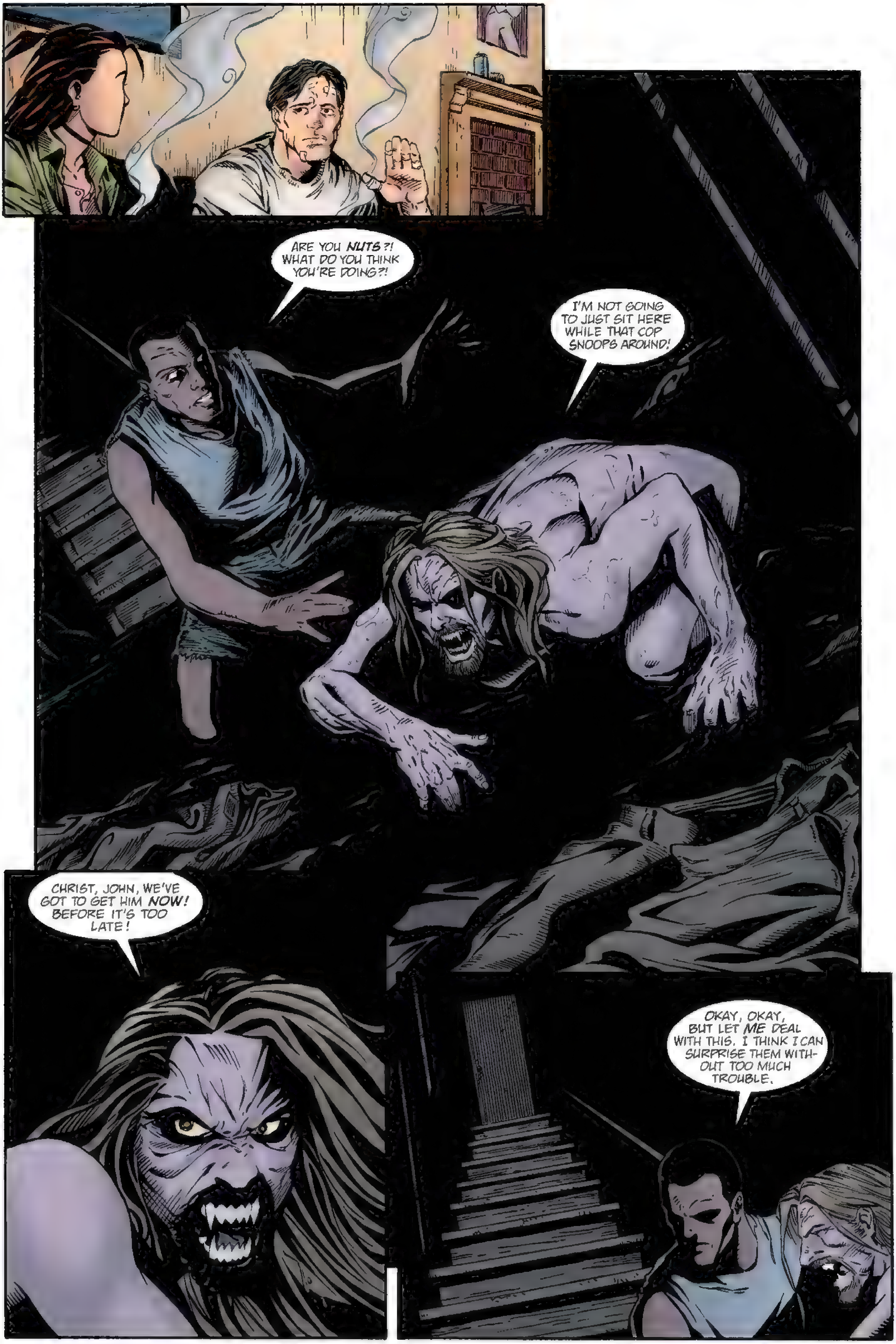

READY FOR THE SHIT TO FLY, CAL?
NOT JUST *YET*, THANK YOU. GIMME ANOTHER DECADE.
WHAT WAS *THAT?*
HE'S A GHOUL. HIS **NAME** IS **MO'LOCK**. PRETTY HARMLESS, REALLY. ALL HE DOES IS LURK AROUND, ACTING CREEPY.
WHAT WAS THAT HE SAID?
OH, HE'S *CONVINCED* THAT A DAY OF THE MONSTERS IS COMING, OR *SOME* CRAP LIKE THAT. THERE WILL BE NOTHING BUT *DARKNESS*, AND ALL THE *MONSTERS* IN THE WORLD WILL ROAM FREE, AND BLAH, BLAH, BLAH. HE'S PARANOID. GIVES HIM SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT.
WE *FINALLY* GOT TO A STORE, SO I WAITED OUTSIDE WHILE SHE WENT IN AND BOUGHT THE BEER. I ASKED HER TO GRAB ME SOME SMOKES AND A NEW LIGHTER. MINE WAS DEAD.
SHE WAS IN AND OUT IN *NO TIME* AND RETURNED WITH A CASE OF GOOD, CHEAP *CERVEZA*. THE KIND THAT DIDN'T GIVE YOU A HANGOVER, JUST KEPT YOU FARTING FOR A WEEK. FINE BY ME. *I'VE* GOT NO PRIDE. I OFFERED TO CARRY THE BAG, BUT SHE REFUSED. FINE.
Oct. 28 7:30 PM MONSTER TRUCK EXTRAVAGANZA! FEATURING BIG DADDY DON BOONE AND THE BOHEMIATH! CARSON AIRGROUND

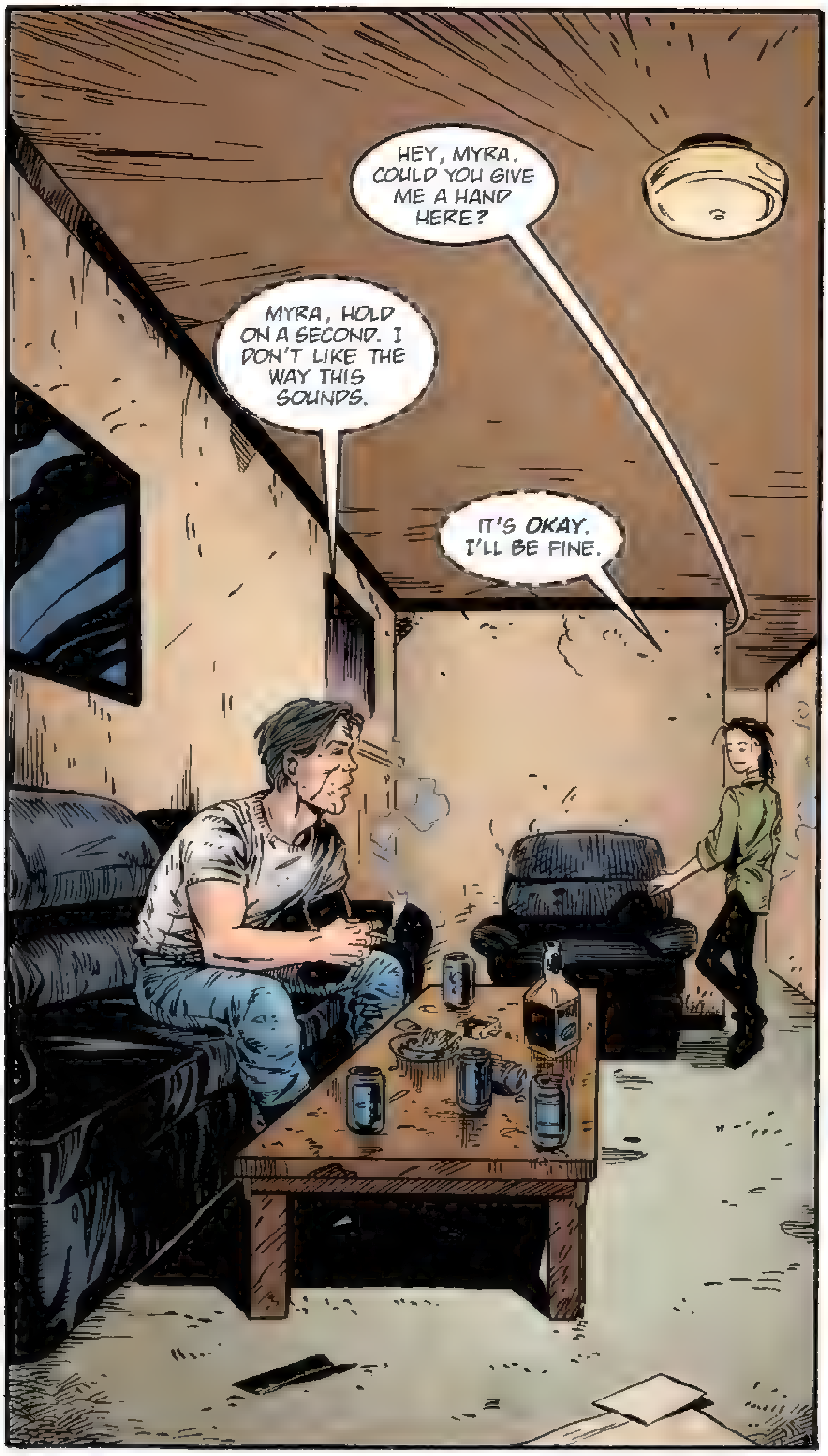

HEY CAL! I THINK MY WIFE'S A WITCH! HEP ME! HEP ME!
GREAT, JUST WHAT I NEED. MY OLD PARTNER, NATE.
POLICE
91
WHAT IS THIS? GIVE-CAL-SHIT NIGHT?
YOU A COP?
I WAS FOR ABOUT A YEAR.
OH YEAH? WHAT HAPPENED?
DRUG TESTING. I FAILED WITH FLYING COLORS.
DO YOU THINK THERE'S ANY WAY YOU COULD GET JOHN AND SEAN OUT OF THE HOUSE? I WANT TO GET A LOOK AT THAT BASEMENT.
GOD, I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE JOHN, BUT SEAN DOESN'T EVEN TALK TO ME.
FORGET IT. HOW ABOUT OFFERING THEM SOME BEER? IT'LL GIVE ME A CHANCE TO CHECK THEM OUT CLOSER.
SURE. JOHN'LL STAMPEDE.

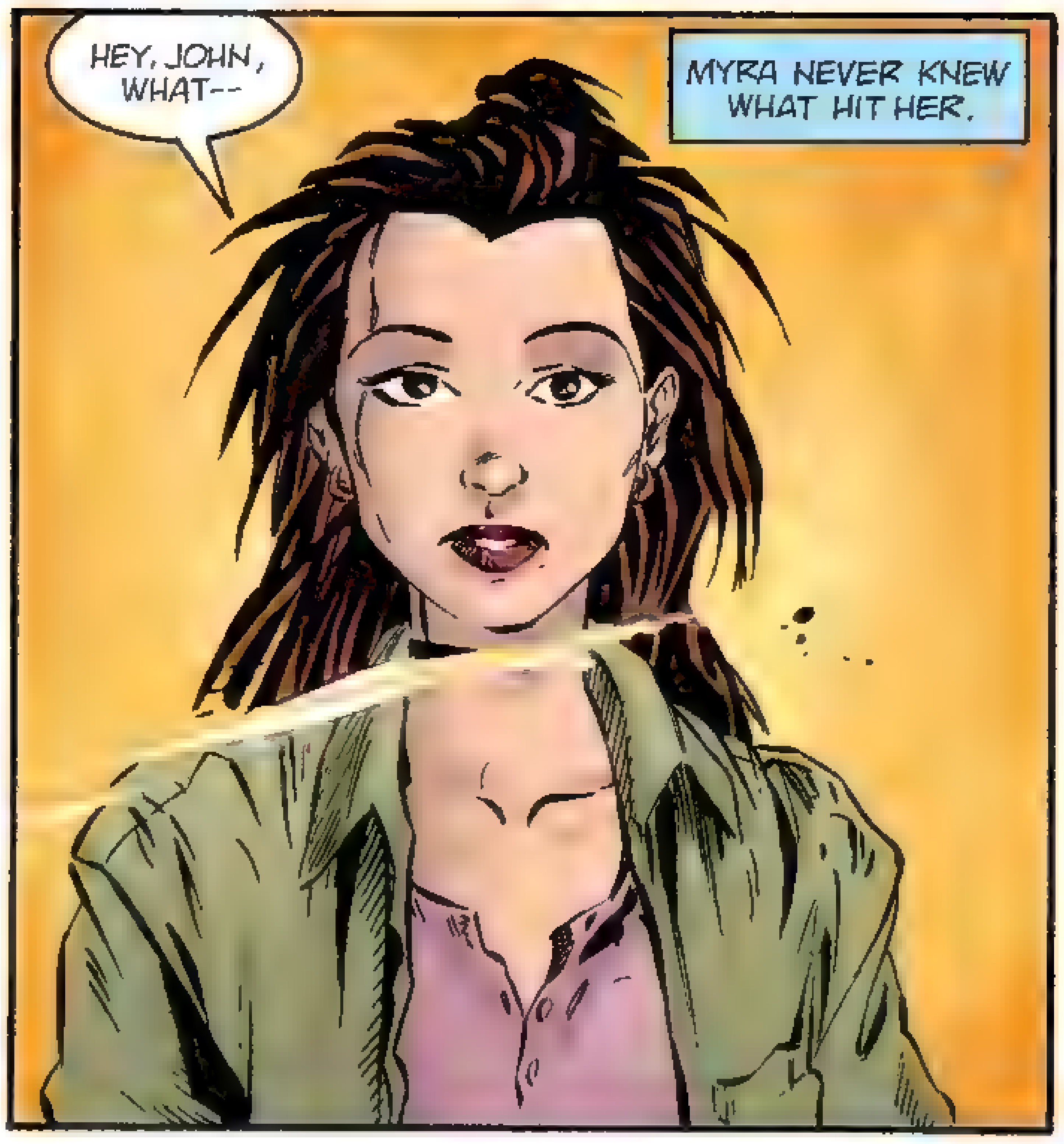

BACK AT THE HOUSE, WE PUT THE BEER IN THE ICEBOX. I COULD HEAR ONE OF THE TWO COUGHING. CHOKING ON A **BABY**, I THOUGHT, THEN DISMISSED THE IDEA. NO USE JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS UNTIL I KNEW **EXACTLY** WHAT I WAS DEALING WITH. ON MYRA'S REQUEST, WE SETTLED ONTO THE COUCH AND COMMENCED DRINKING AND SMOKING. I DRANK DOWN **TWO** IN THE TIME SHE FINISHED **ONE**. I WAS WIRED. MY TOLERANCE WAS UP.
COUGH COUGH COUGH
AFTER A WHILE, I HEARD COUGHING AGAIN, AND **THIS** TIME IT WAS CLOSE BY. JOHN TOOK THE BAIT.
MIND IF I GRAB A **BEER?**
HELP YOURSELF.
I TURNED AND WINKED AT HER. IN THE KITCHEN I HEARD THE FRIDGE OPEN AND CLOSE, THEN JOHN COUGHED, HOCKED, AND SPIT. GOD KNOWS **WHERE**.
AAKKT PTOO
I NEED A REFILL.
GRAB ME ONE, PLEASE.
HEY, I COULD'VE GOT YOU ONE!
IT'S OKAY. I'M ALREADY UP.

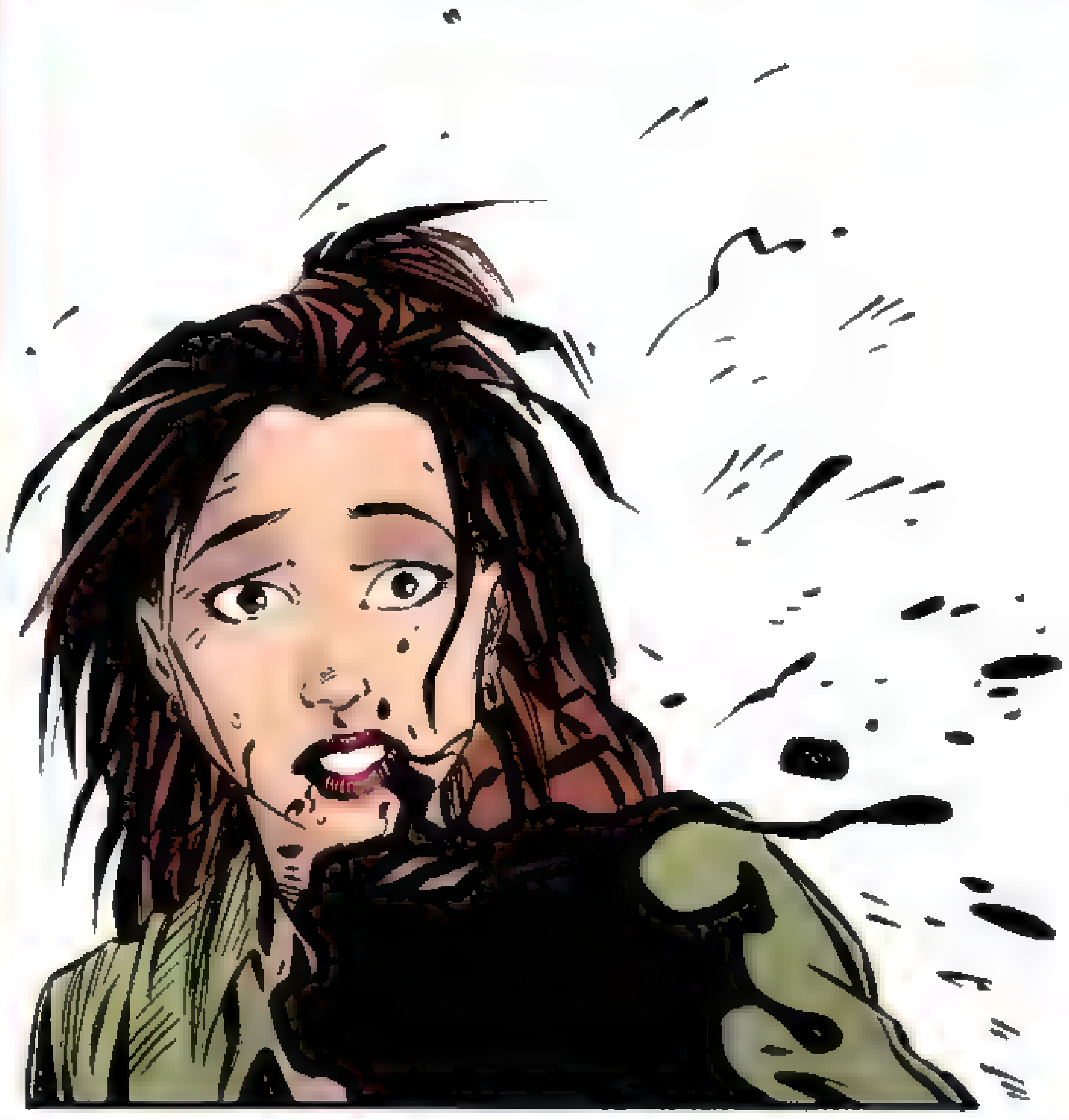

THAT'S WHEN I SAW WHERE JOHN HAD SPIT, MORE IMPORTANTLY WHAT HE'D SPIT.
Catilan
FROZEN PIZZA
NEW
LEM
PPER
6 BATTER DIPPED
CRISPY
FILLETS
DELIQUE
LAST NOTICE!!!
IT SEEMED JOHN HAD A HAIRBALL.

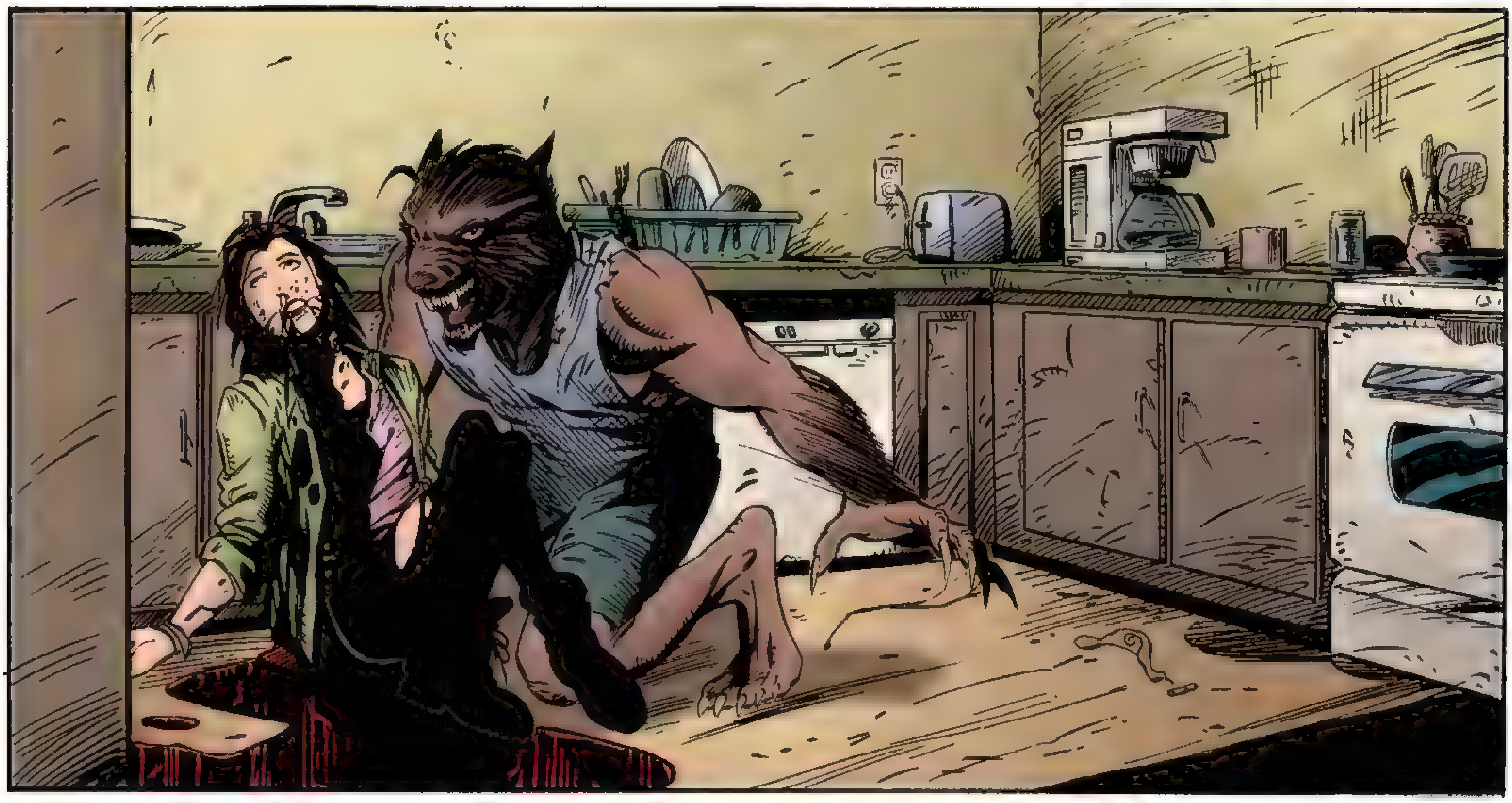

SO, DID JERRY EVER SHOW HIS SORRY ASS?
NOT UNLESS HE CAME BACK WHILE WE WERE OUT.
SHITTY THING TO DO. I MEAN, INVITING YOU, THEN DISAPPEARING.
JOHN WAS TRYING TO ACT NATURAL, AND I WAS STILL FREAKED BY THE "LITTLE PRESENT" HE LEFT IN THE KITCHEN GARBAGE.
BUT JOHN DIDN'T MAKE THE WHOLE HAIRBALL DISAPPEAR. SOME GOT STUCK WHEN HE COUGHED IT UP.
YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING IN YOUR TEETH.
THANKS... YOU VISITING LONG?
KRAKH! THUD!
DAMMIT!
HEH, HEH. SEAN CAN BE SUCH A KLUTZ. I BETTER GO SEE WHAT HE BROKE.

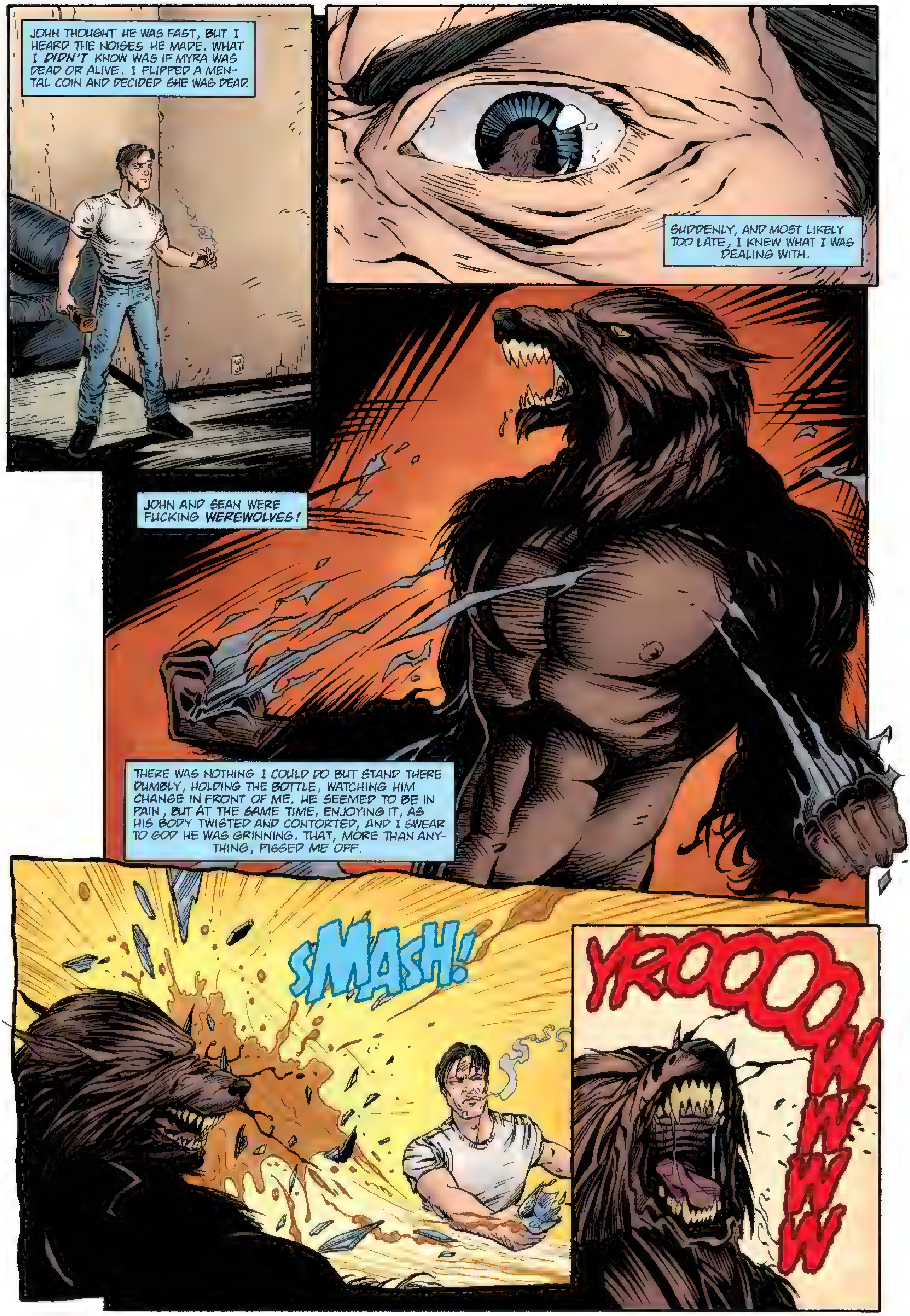

ARE YOU *NUTS*?! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
I'M NOT GOING TO JUST SIT HERE WHILE THAT COP SNOOPS AROUND!
CHRIST, JOHN, WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM *NOW*! BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
OKAY, OKAY, BUT LET *ME* DEAL WITH THIS. I THINK I CAN SURPRISE THEM WITHOUT TOO MUCH TROUBLE.


HEY, MYRA. COULD YOU GIVE ME A HAND HERE?
MYRA, HOLD ON A SECOND. I DON'T LIKE THE WAY THIS SOUNDS.
IT'S *OKAY.* I'LL BE FINE.

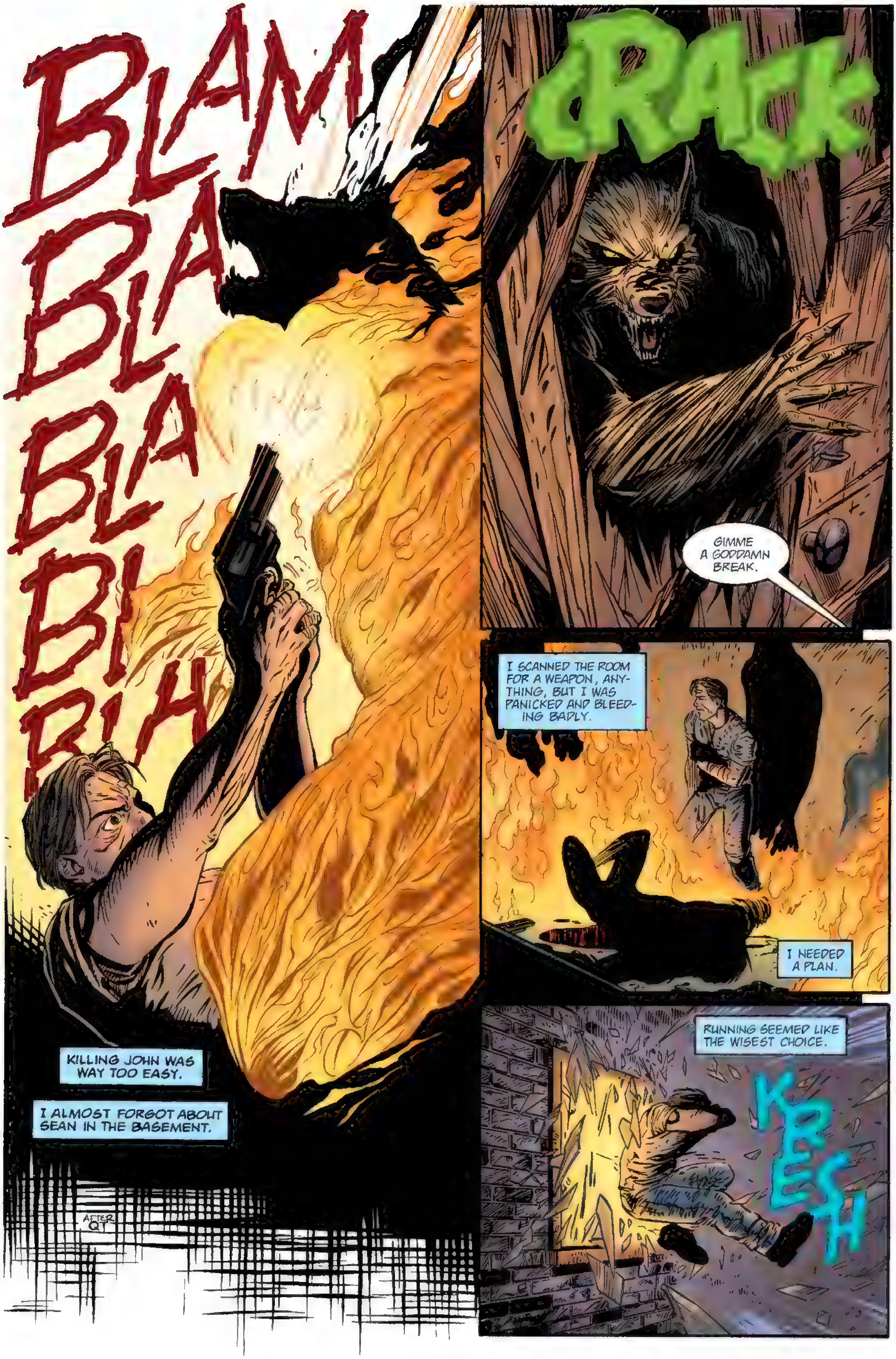

HEY, JOHN, WHAT--
MYRA NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT HER.

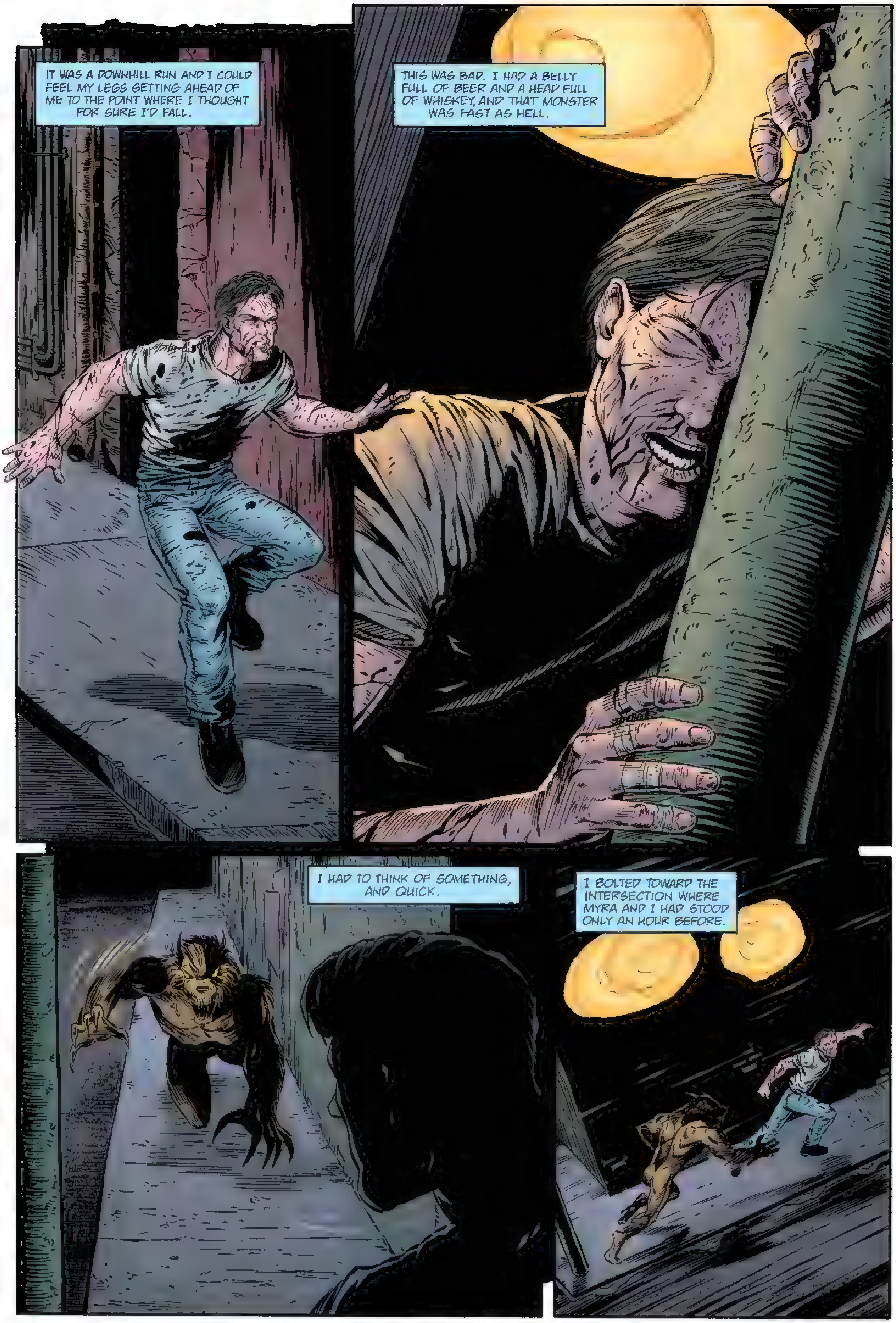


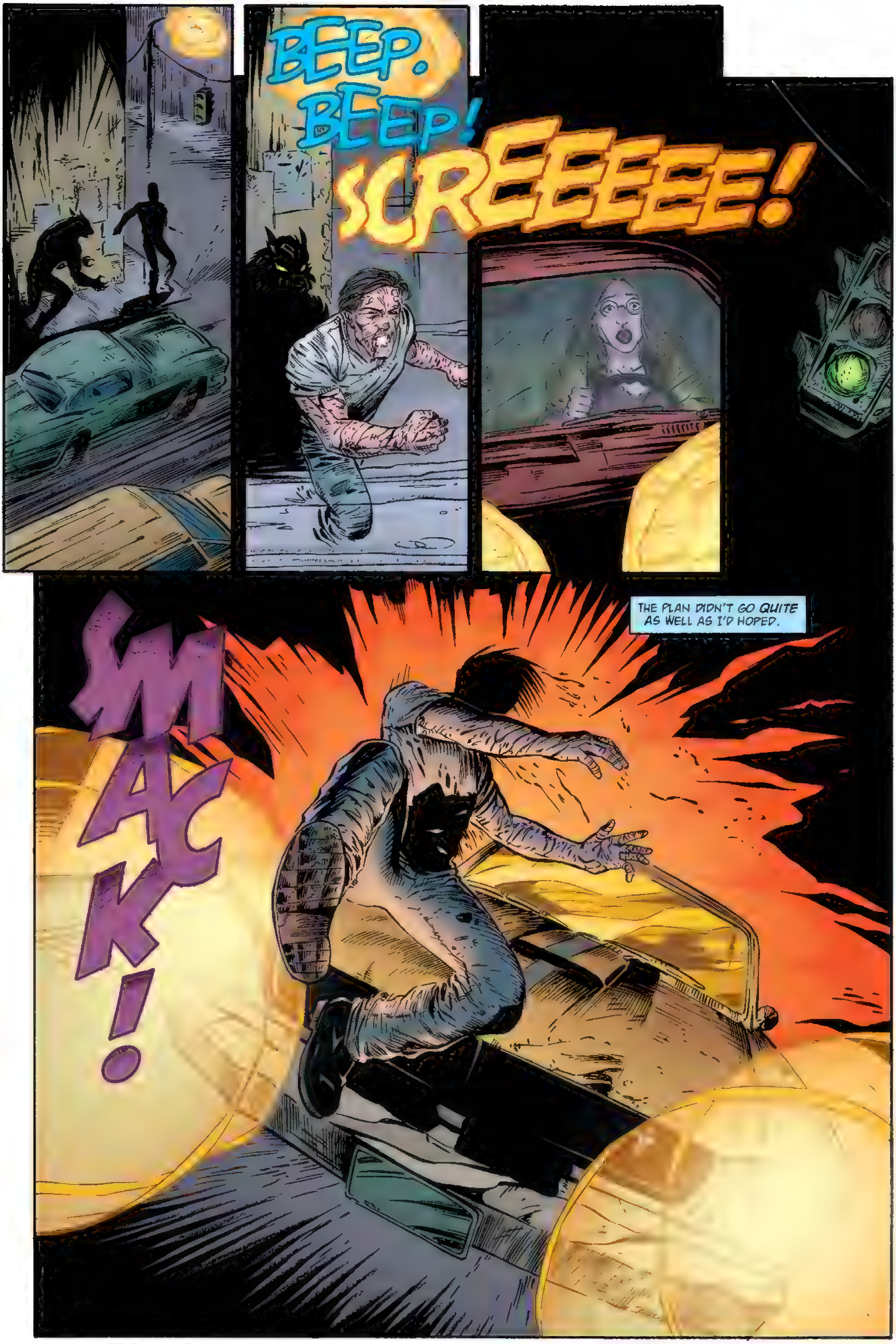


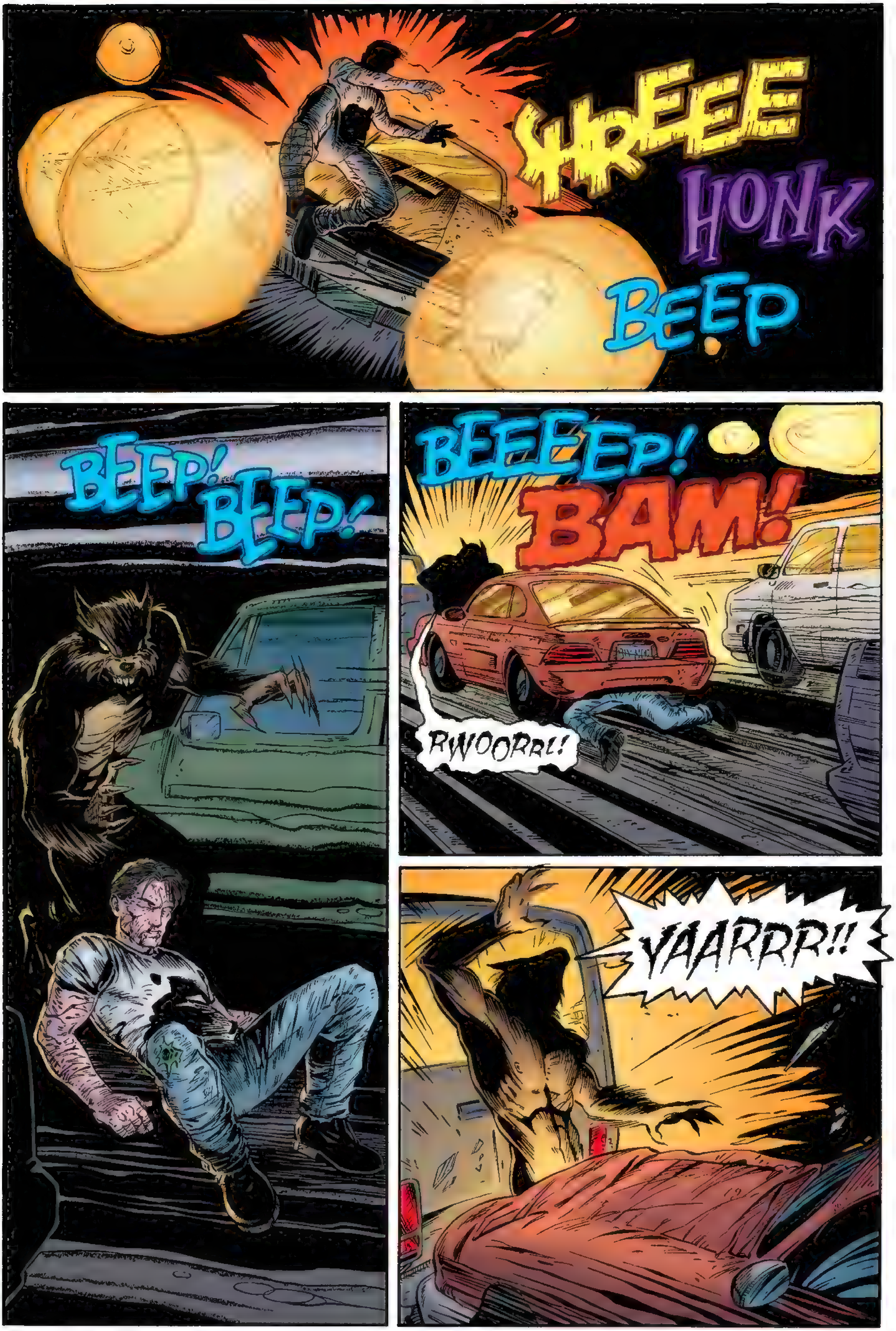

JOHN THOUGHT HE WAS FAST, BUT I HEARD THE NOISES HE MADE. WHAT I *DIDN'T* KNOW WAS IF MYRA WAS DEAD OR ALIVE. I FLIPPED A MENTAL COIN AND DECIDED SHE WAS DEAD.
SUDDENLY, AND MOST LIKELY TOO LATE, I KNEW WHAT I WAS DEALING WITH.
JOHN AND SEAN WERE FUCKING ***WEREWOLVES!***
THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO BUT STAND THERE DUMBLY, HOLDING THE BOTTLE, WATCHING HIM CHANGE IN FRONT OF ME. HE SEEMED TO BE IN PAIN, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, ENJOYING IT, AS HIS BODY TWISTED AND CONTORTED, AND I SWEAR TO GOD HE WAS GRINNING. THAT, MORE THAN ANYTHING, PISSED ME OFF.
SMASH!
YROOOOOWWWW

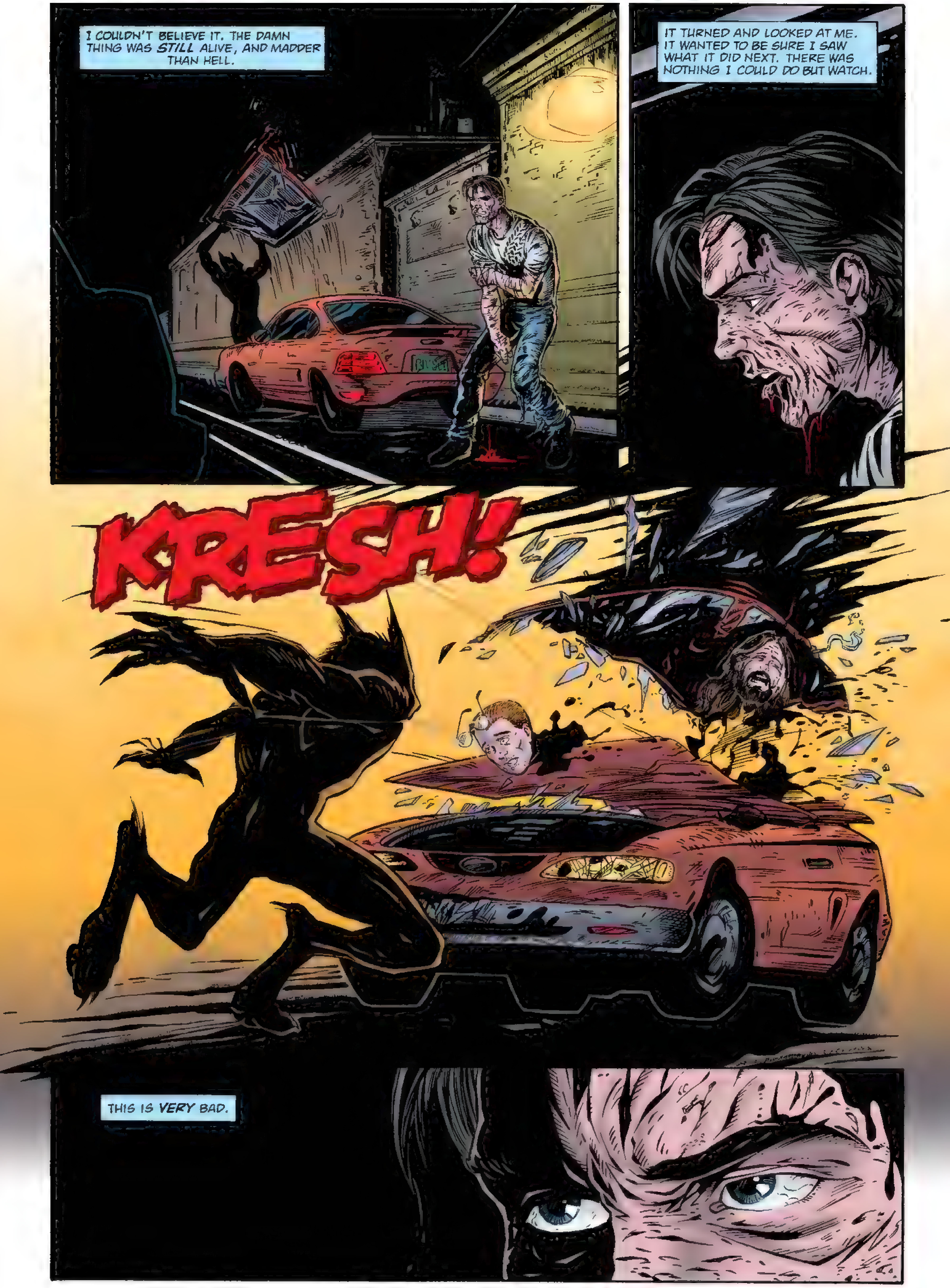
WHOOSH
FWSST
THWACK!
THUD
GRRRWLL!

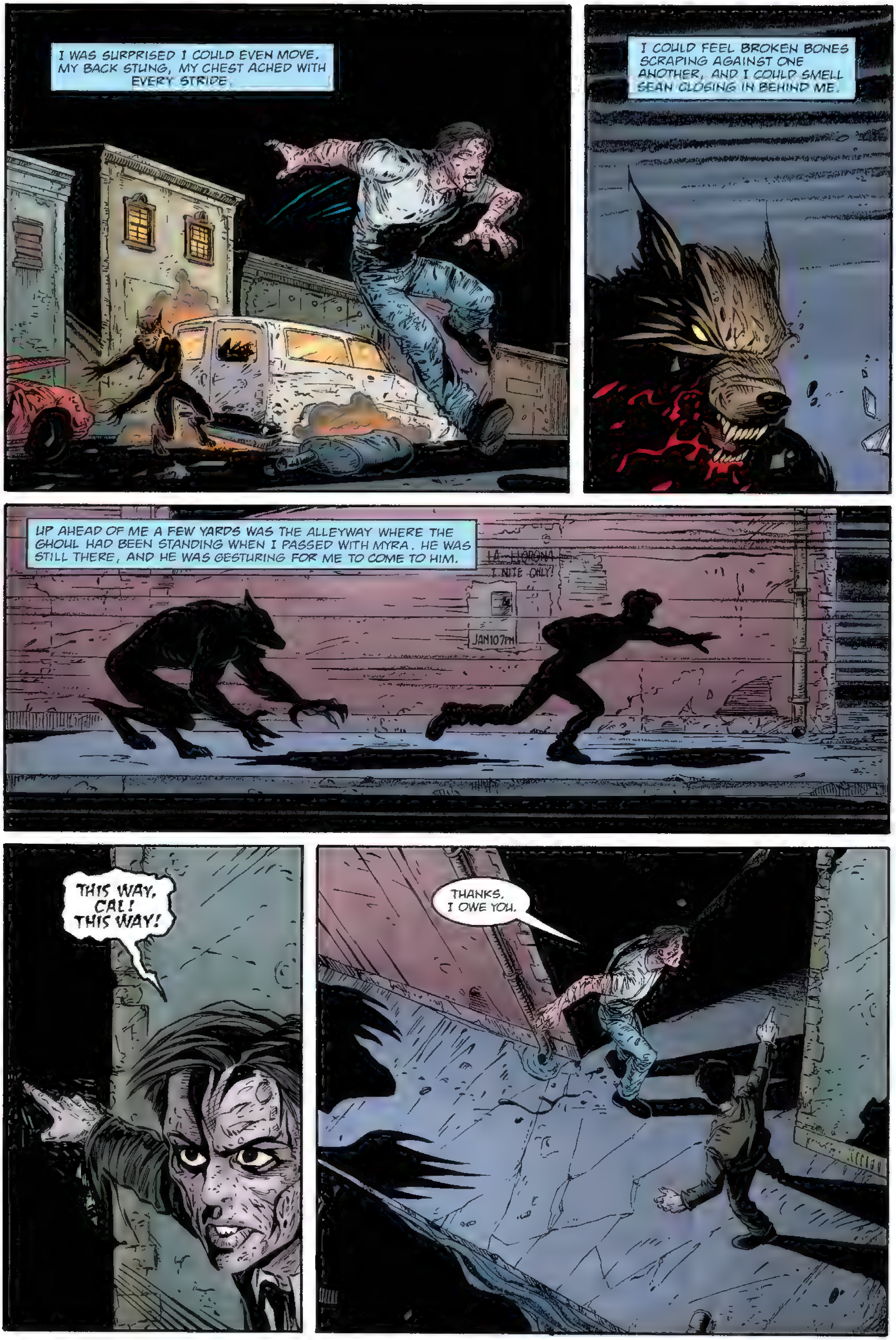

BLAM
BLA
BLA
BLA
BL
BLAH
KILLING JOHN WAS WAY TOO EASY.
I ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT SEAN IN THE BASEMENT.
AFTER QT
CRACK
GIMME A GODDAMN BREAK.
I SCANNED THE ROOM FOR A WEAPON, ANYTHING, BUT I WAS PANICKED AND BLEEDING BADLY.
I NEEDED A PLAN.
RUNNING SEEMED LIKE THE WISEST CHOICE.
KRESH

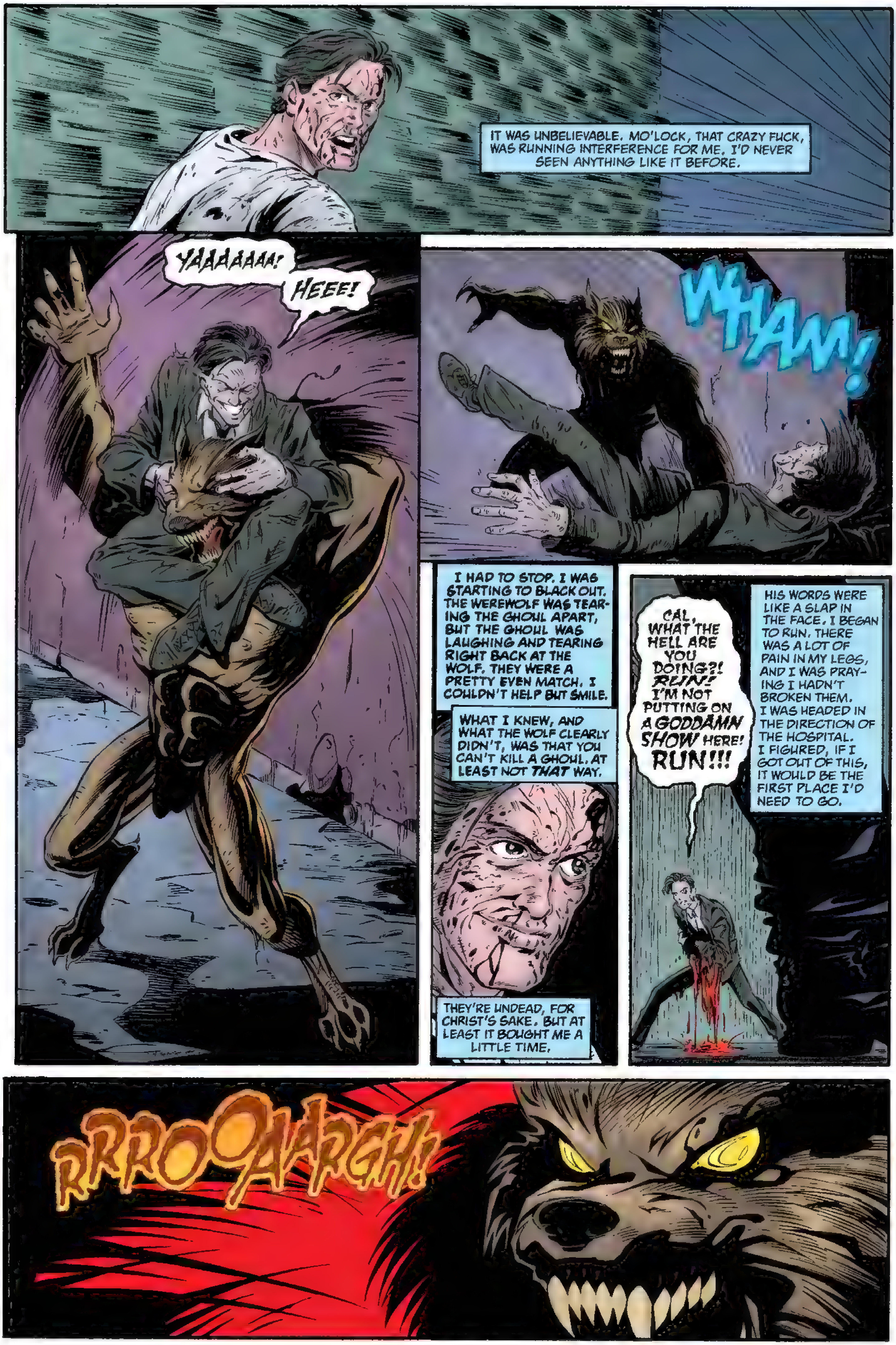

IT WAS A DOWNHILL RUN AND I COULD FEEL MY LEGS GETTING AHEAD OF ME TO THE POINT WHERE I THOUGHT FOR SURE I'D FALL.
THIS WAS BAD. I HAD A BELLY FULL OF BEER AND A HEAD FULL OF WHISKEY, AND THAT MONSTER WAS FAST AS HELL.
I HAD TO THINK OF SOMETHING, AND QUICK.
I BOLTED TOWARD THE INTERSECTION WHERE MYRA AND I HAD STOOD ONLY AN HOUR BEFORE.

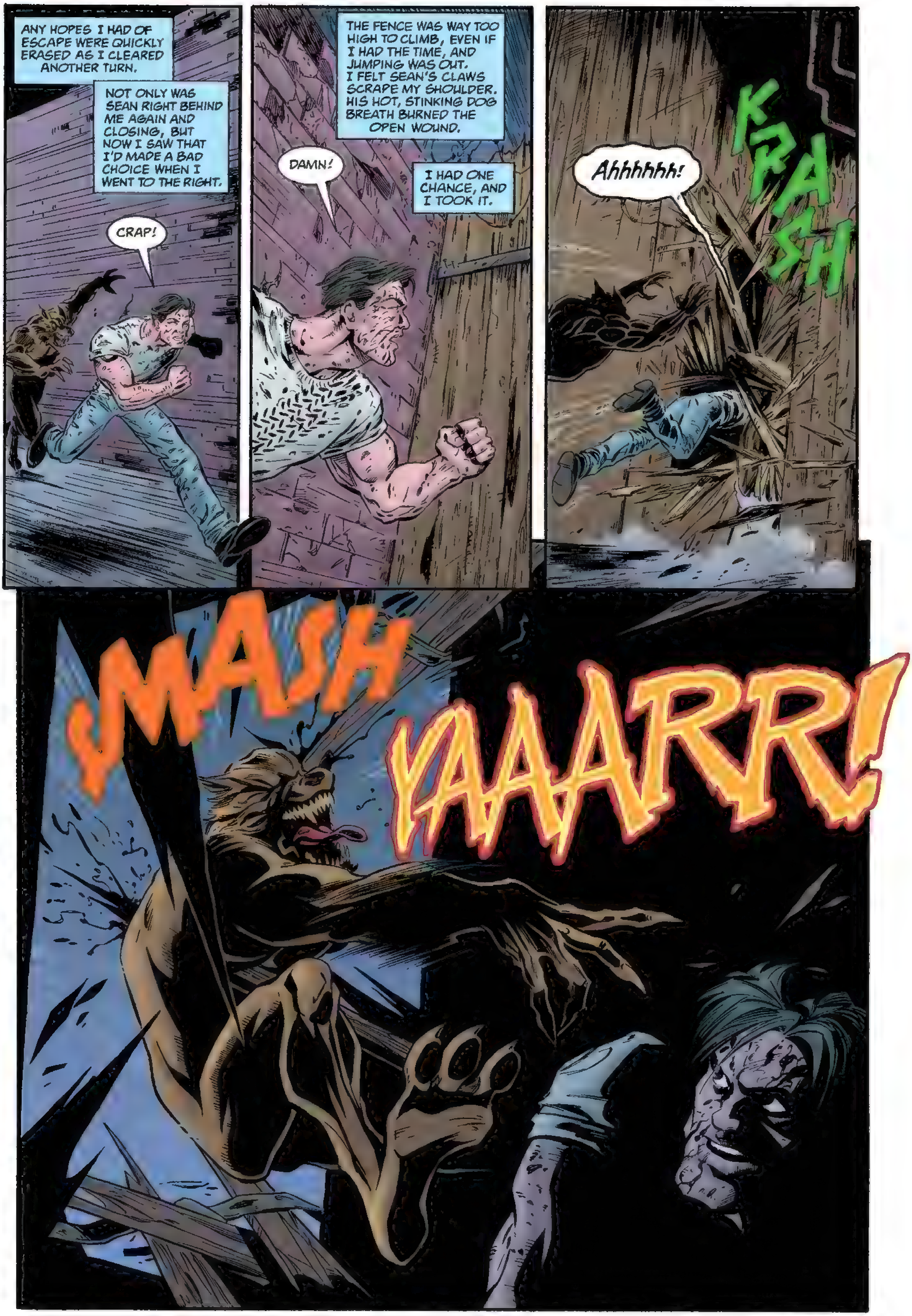

BEEP. BEEP!
SCREEEEEE!
THE PLAN DIDN'T GO QUITE AS WELL AS I'D HOPED.
SMACK!

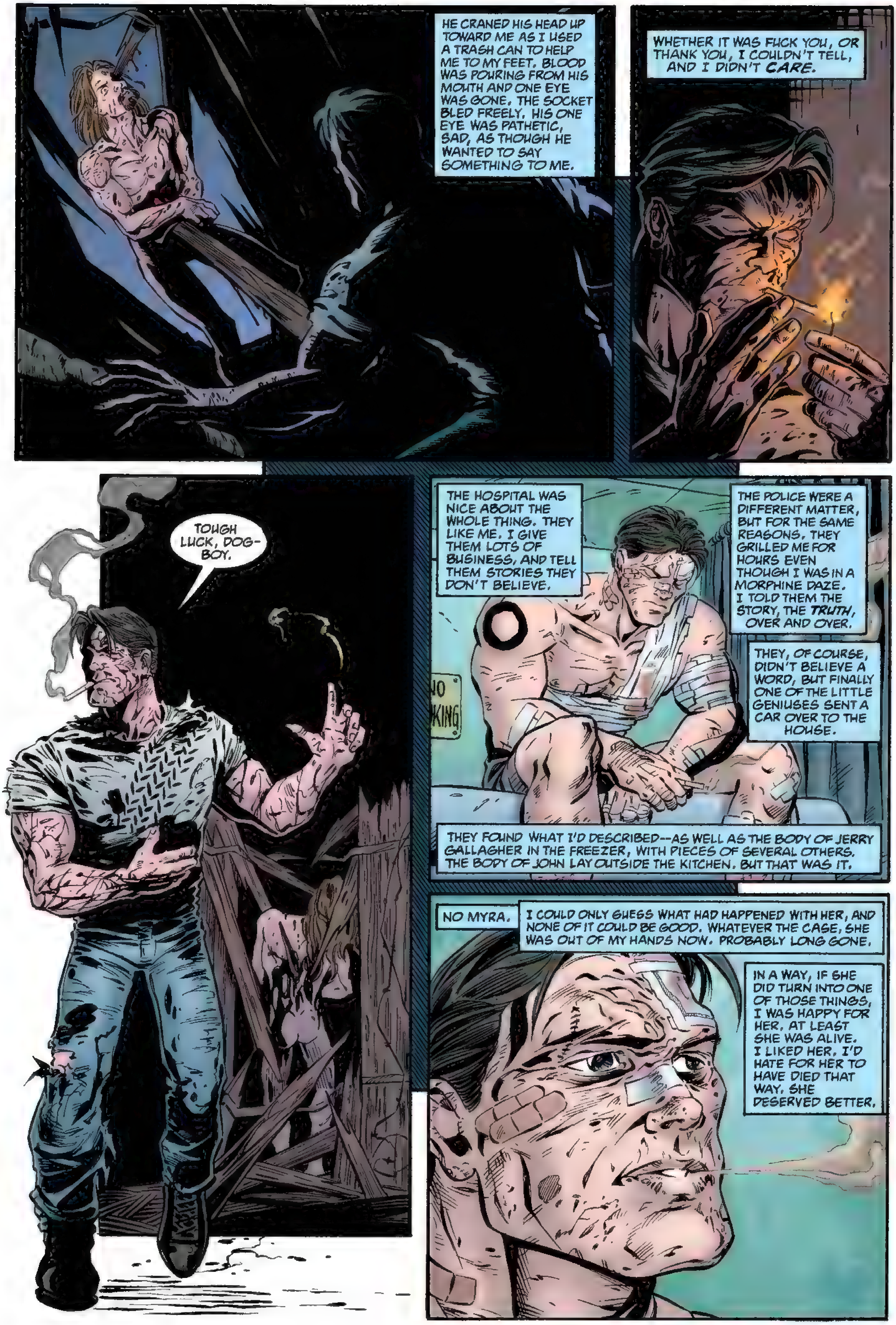

SHREEE
HONK
BEEP
BEEP! BEEP!
BEEEEP!
BAM!
RWOORRL!
YAARRR!!

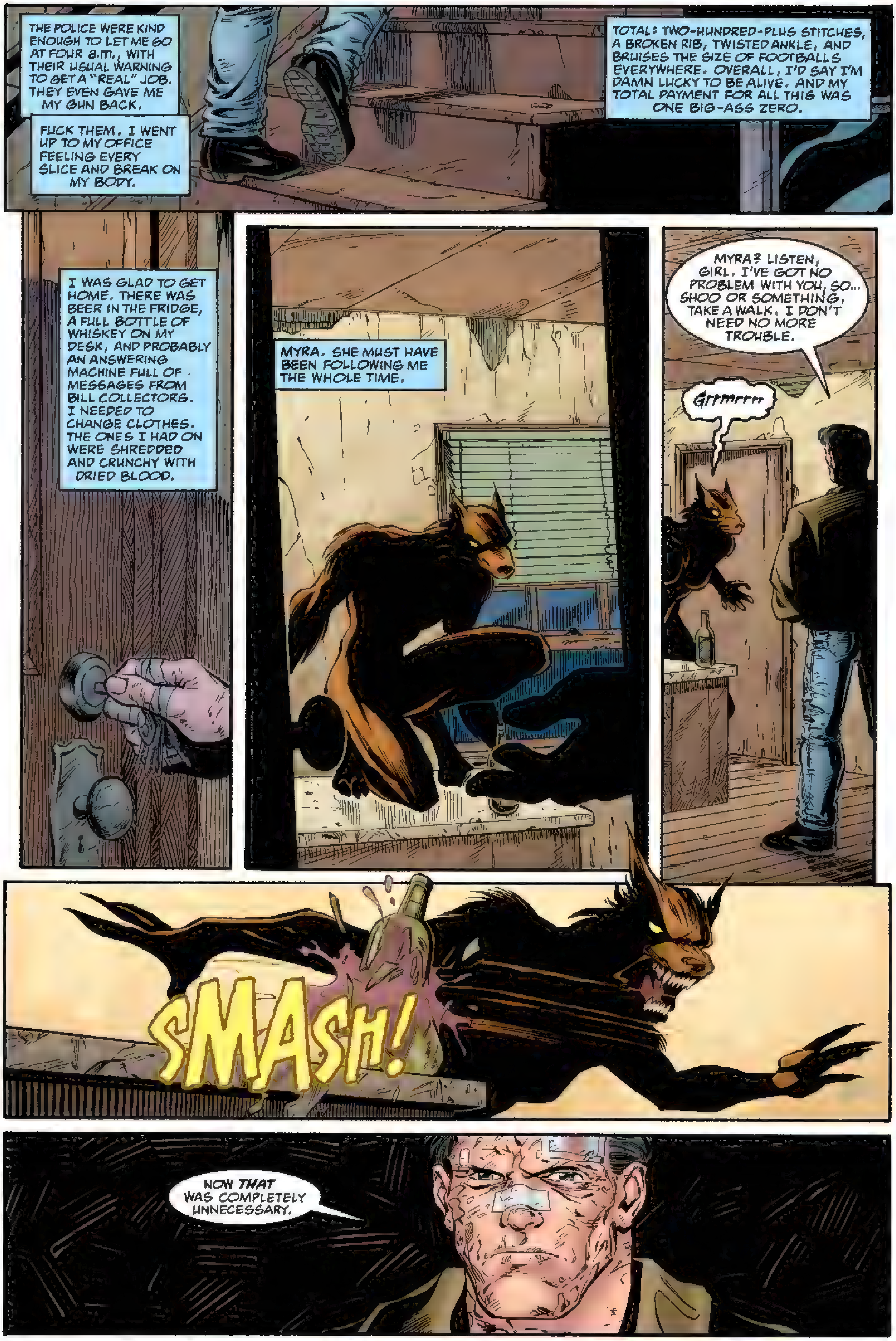

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. THE DAMN THING WAS STILL ALIVE, AND MADDER THAN HELL.
IT TURNED AND LOOKED AT ME. IT WANTED TO BE SURE I SAW WHAT IT DID NEXT. THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO BUT WATCH.
KRESH!
THIS IS VERY BAD.

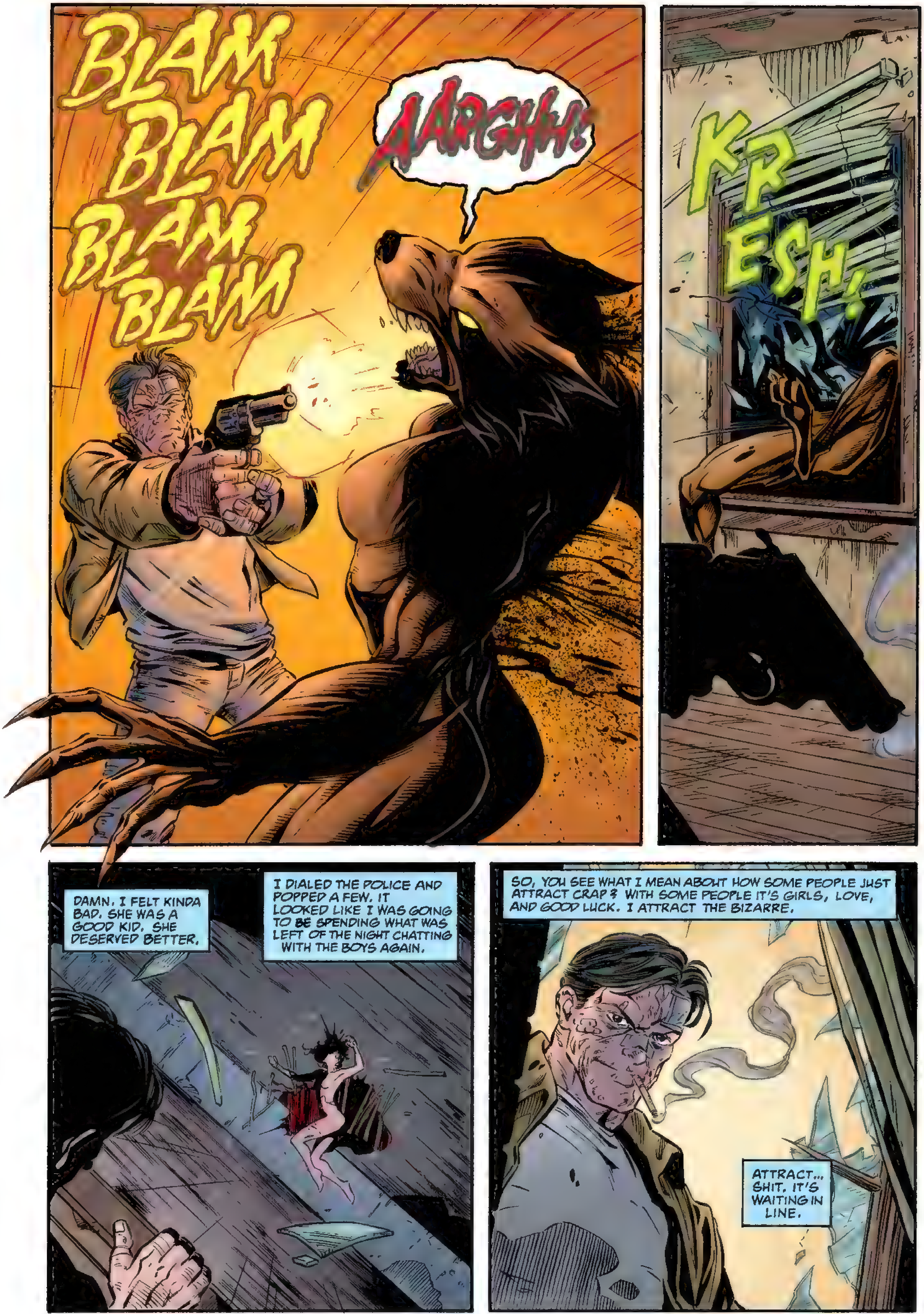

I WAS SURPRISED I COULD EVEN MOVE. MY BACK STUNG, MY CHEST ACHED WITH EVERY STRIDE.
I COULD FEEL BROKEN BONES SCRAPING AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, AND I COULD SMELL SEAN CLOSING IN BEHIND ME.
UP AHEAD OF ME A FEW YARDS WAS THE ALLEYWAY WHERE THE GHOUL HAD BEEN STANDING WHEN I PASSED WITH MYRA. HE WAS STILL THERE, AND HE WAS GESTURING FOR ME TO COME TO HIM.
LA LLORONA
1 NITE ONLY!
JAN 10 7PM
THIS WAY, CAL! THIS WAY!
THANKS. I OWE YOU.


IT WAS UNBELIEVABLE. MO'LOCK, THAT CRAZY FUCK, WAS RUNNING INTERFERENCE FOR ME. I'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT BEFORE.
YAAAAAAA!
HEEE!
WHAM!
I HAD TO STOP. I WAS STARTING TO BLACK OUT. THE WEREWOLF WAS TEARING THE GHOUL APART, BUT THE GHOUL WAS LAUGHING AND TEARING RIGHT BACK AT THE WOLF. THEY WERE A PRETTY EVEN MATCH. I COULDN'T HELP BUT SMILE.
WHAT I KNEW, AND WHAT THE WOLF CLEARLY DIDN'T, WAS THAT YOU CAN'T KILL A GHOUL, AT LEAST NOT *THAT* WAY.
THEY'RE UNDEAD, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. BUT AT LEAST IT BOUGHT ME A LITTLE TIME.
CAL, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?! *RUN!* I'M NOT PUTTING ON A GODDAMN SHOW HERE! RUN!!!
HIS WORDS WERE LIKE A SLAP IN THE FACE. I BEGAN TO RUN. THERE WAS A LOT OF PAIN IN MY LEGS, AND I WAS PRAYING I HADN'T BROKEN THEM. I WAS HEADED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE HOSPITAL. I FIGURED, IF I GOT OUT OF THIS, IT WOULD BE THE FIRST PLACE I'D NEED TO GO.
RRROOAARGH!


ANY HOPES I HAD OF ESCAPE WERE QUICKLY ERASED AS I CLEARED ANOTHER TURN.
NOT ONLY WAS SEAN RIGHT BEHIND ME AGAIN AND CLOSING, BUT NOW I SAW THAT I'D MADE A BAD CHOICE WHEN I WENT TO THE RIGHT.
CRAP!
THE FENCE WAS WAY TOO HIGH TO CLIMB, EVEN IF I HAD THE TIME, AND JUMPING WAS OUT. I FELT SEAN'S CLAWS SCRAPE MY SHOULDER. HIS HOT, STINKING DOG BREATH BURNED THE OPEN WOUND.
DAMN!
I HAD ONE CHANCE, AND I TOOK IT.
KRASH
Ahhhhhh!
SMASH
YAAARR!


HE CRANED HIS HEAD UP TOWARD ME AS I USED A TRASH CAN TO HELP ME TO MY FEET. BLOOD WAS POURING FROM HIS MOUTH AND ONE EYE WAS GONE. THE SOCKET BLED FREELY. HIS ONE EYE WAS PATHETIC, SAD, AS THOUGH HE WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING TO ME.
WHETHER IT WAS FUCK YOU, OR THANK YOU, I COULDN'T TELL, AND I DIDN'T ***CARE***.
TOUGH LUCK, DOG-BOY.
THE HOSPITAL WAS NICE ABOUT THE WHOLE THING. THEY LIKE ME. I GIVE THEM LOTS OF BUSINESS, AND TELL THEM STORIES THEY DON'T BELIEVE.
THE POLICE WERE A DIFFERENT MATTER, BUT FOR THE SAME REASONS. THEY GRILLED ME FOR HOURS EVEN THOUGH I WAS IN A MORPHINE DAZE. I TOLD THEM THE STORY, THE *TRUTH*, OVER AND OVER.
THEY, OF COURSE, DIDN'T BELIEVE A WORD, BUT FINALLY ONE OF THE LITTLE GENIUSES SENT A CAR OVER TO THE HOUSE.
NO ...KING
THEY FOUND WHAT I'D DESCRIBED--AS WELL AS THE BODY OF JERRY GALLAGHER IN THE FREEZER, WITH PIECES OF SEVERAL OTHERS. THE BODY OF JOHN LAY OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN. BUT THAT WAS IT.
NO MYRA.
I COULD ONLY GUESS WHAT HAD HAPPENED WITH HER, AND NONE OF IT COULD BE GOOD. WHATEVER THE CASE, SHE WAS OUT OF MY HANDS NOW. PROBABLY LONG GONE.
IN A WAY, IF SHE DID TURN INTO ONE OF THOSE THINGS, I WAS HAPPY FOR HER. AT LEAST SHE WAS ALIVE. I LIKED HER. I'D HATE FOR HER TO HAVE DIED THAT WAY. SHE DESERVED BETTER.


THE POLICE WERE KIND ENOUGH TO LET ME GO AT FOUR a.m., WITH THEIR USUAL WARNING TO GET A "REAL" JOB. THEY EVEN GAVE ME MY GUN BACK.
FUCK THEM. I WENT UP TO MY OFFICE FEELING EVERY SLICE AND BREAK ON MY BODY.
TOTAL: TWO-HUNDRED-PLUS STITCHES, A BROKEN RIB, TWISTED ANKLE, AND BRUISES THE SIZE OF FOOTBALLS EVERYWHERE. OVERALL, I'D SAY I'M DAMN LUCKY TO BE ALIVE. AND MY TOTAL PAYMENT FOR ALL THIS WAS ONE BIG-ASS ZERO.
I WAS GLAD TO GET HOME. THERE WAS BEER IN THE FRIDGE, A FULL BOTTLE OF WHISKEY ON MY DESK, AND PROBABLY AN ANSWERING MACHINE FULL OF MESSAGES FROM BILL COLLECTORS. I NEEDED TO CHANGE CLOTHES. THE ONES I HAD ON WERE SHREDDED AND CRUNCHY WITH DRIED BLOOD.
MYRA. SHE MUST HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING ME THE WHOLE TIME.
MYRA? LISTEN, GIRL. I'VE GOT NO PROBLEM WITH YOU, SO... SHOO OR SOMETHING. TAKE A WALK. I DON'T NEED NO MORE TROUBLE.
Grrmrrrr
SMASH!
NOW *THAT* WAS COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY.


BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
AARGHH!
KRESH!
DAMN. I FELT KINDA BAD. SHE WAS A GOOD KID. SHE DESERVED BETTER.
I DIALED THE POLICE AND POPPED A FEW. IT LOOKED LIKE I WAS GOING TO BE SPENDING WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE NIGHT CHATTING WITH THE BOYS AGAIN.
SO, YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN ABOUT HOW SOME PEOPLE JUST ATTRACT CRAP? WITH SOME PEOPLE IT'S GIRLS, LOVE, AND GOOD LUCK. I ATTRACT THE BIZARRE.
ATTRACT... SHIT. IT'S WAITING IN LINE.

CASEY JONES

FEAT OF CLAY

story
STEVE NILES

art
KYLE HOTZ

colors
MICHELLE MADSEN

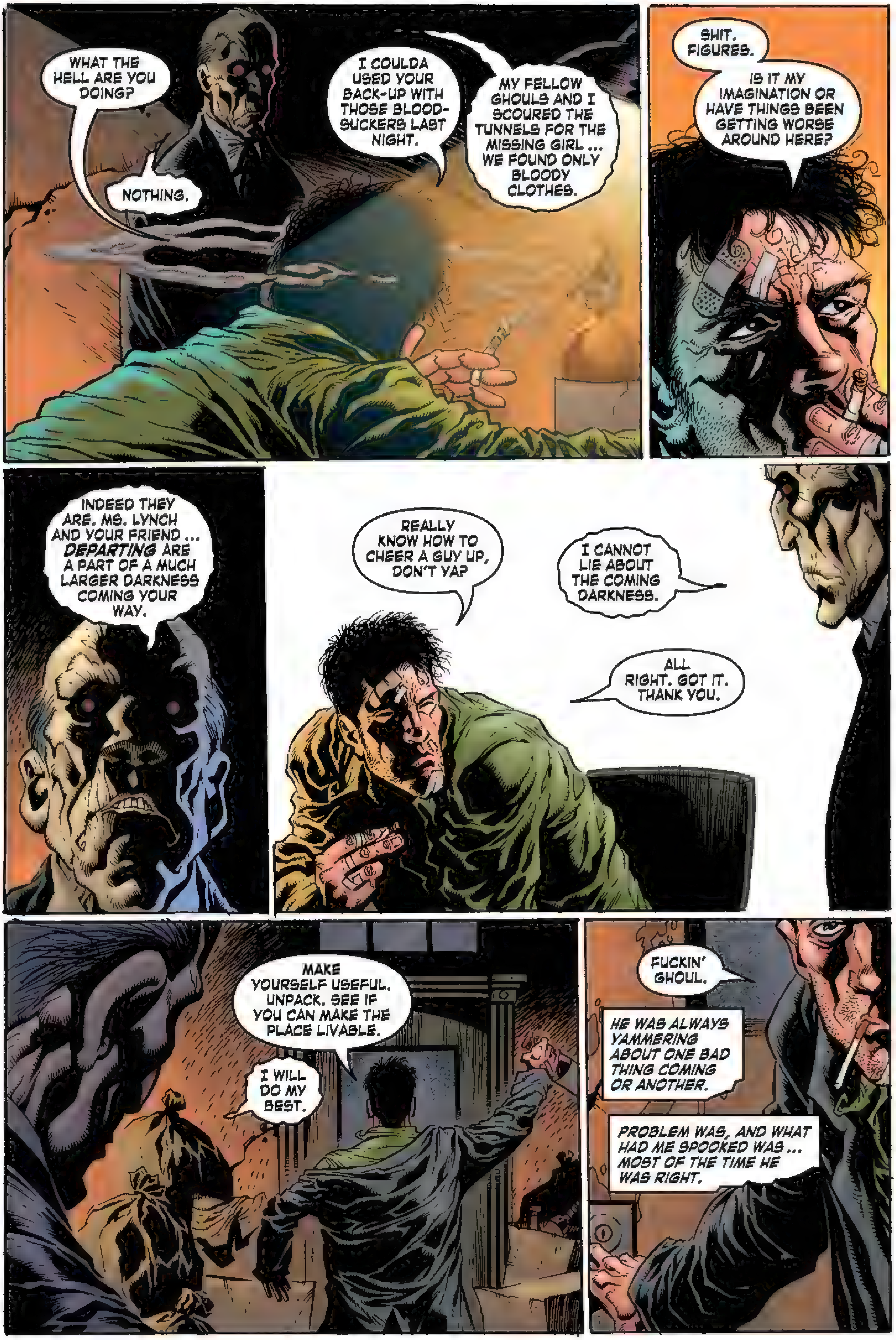
letters
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®

THINGS COULDN'T HAVE BEEN BETTER. I WAS LIVING IN A SHITTY APARTMENT SINCE MY HOUSE (THAT ACTUALLY BELONGED TO SAM BARNETT) WAS LEVELED BY SOME FUCK-FACED FREAK.
AND SEEING AS THE COSMOS WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF TAKING A MASSIVE DUMP ON MY HEAD, I ALSO LOST TWO PEOPLE WHO I LET GET CLOSE.
THAT INCLUDES A WOMAN WHO WAS THE CLOSEST THING TO A RELATIONSHIP I HAD IN YEARS.
SABRINA PACKED HER BAGS ABOUT A WEEK AGO, TWO MONTHS AFTER THE HOUSE WAS DESTROYED.
SHE'D FINALLY HAD ENOUGH OF ME AND THE WHOLE MESS. SHE HAS A FRIEND IN SAN FRANCISCO SHE WENT TO STAY WITH WHO RUNS A CO-OP. HIPPIE SHIT.

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR HIPPIE SHIT ANYWAY.
I GOT MONSTERS AND FREAKS TO KILL.
YEAH.
BESIDES, SHE'S BETTER OFF WITHOUT ME. I'D ONLY GET HER KILLED TOO. FUCK IT, AND FUCK HER FOR LEAVING.
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS SUMMER, AND I WAS OPERATING OUT OF AN ALL-BUT-EMPTY APARTMENT, BUSINESS HAD BEEN STEADY.
NOT ALL OF IT PAID, BUT I WAS USED TO THAT.
SOME GIGS ARE JUST FOR FUN.

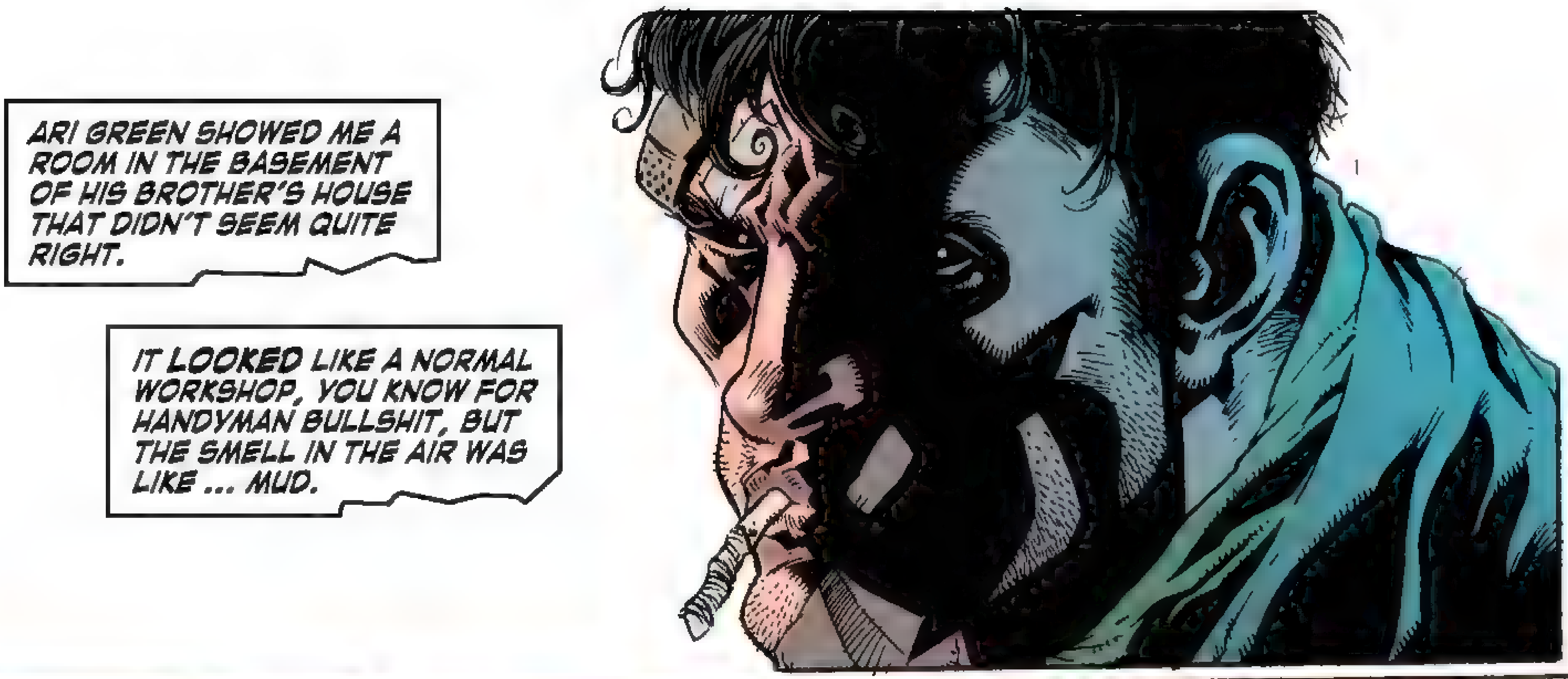
RISE AND SHINE, *FUCK-HEADS!*
LATE SLEEPERS, HUH? TOO BAD.
BOOM
ARRGH!
OOF!
HEARD YOU GUYS MADE OFF WITH A LITTLE GIRL. TELL ME WHERE SHE IS AND I PROMISE A QUICK BEATING TO DEATH.
BOOM
WHERE'S THE GIRL?
SHE IS ... GONE.
WHAT?!
WE FED ON HER ALREADY ... LAST NIGHT.
BOOOM BOOOM

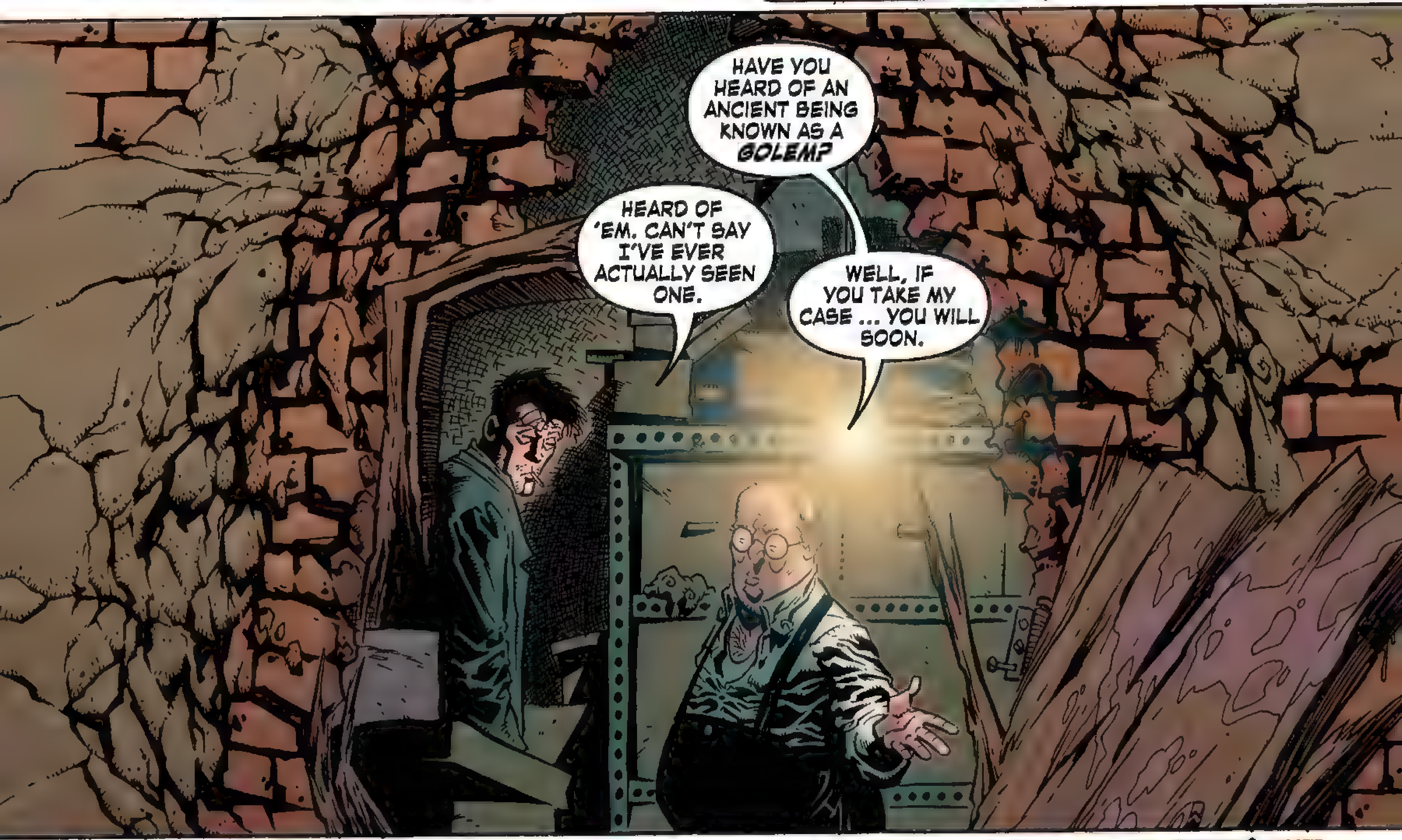
IT WAS EARLY ON A TUESDAY WHEN I GOT A CALL FROM AN OLD MAN WHO LIVED OVER IN HOLLYWOOD, UP AND AWAY FROM ALL THE TOURIST BULLSHIT.
IS THIS MR. CAL MCDONALD?
KO
Uh-huh.
I HAVE A PROBLEM. I AM AN OLD FRIEND OF HECKY BARNETT'S.* I HEAR YOU ARE LIVING IN HIS HOME.
YEAH, WELL, THAT--
*SAM BARNETT'S NICKNAME.
DID YOU KNOW HECKY'S FATHER BUILT THAT HOUSE?
THE HOUSE I LEVELED.
NO. GEE WHIZ. WHO'DA THUNK IT?
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, MISTER ...?
GREEN. ARI GREEN. I'M AN OLD FRIEND OF HECKY'S.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, MR. GREEN?
I HAVE A PROBLEM. REALLY IT'S MY BROTHER'S PROBLEM, BUT HE'S ... PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER IF WE MET, MR. MCDONALD.
SURE. I'LL COME TO YOUR PLACE.
THAT WILL BE FINE. THANK YOU, DETECTIVE.
SLAM

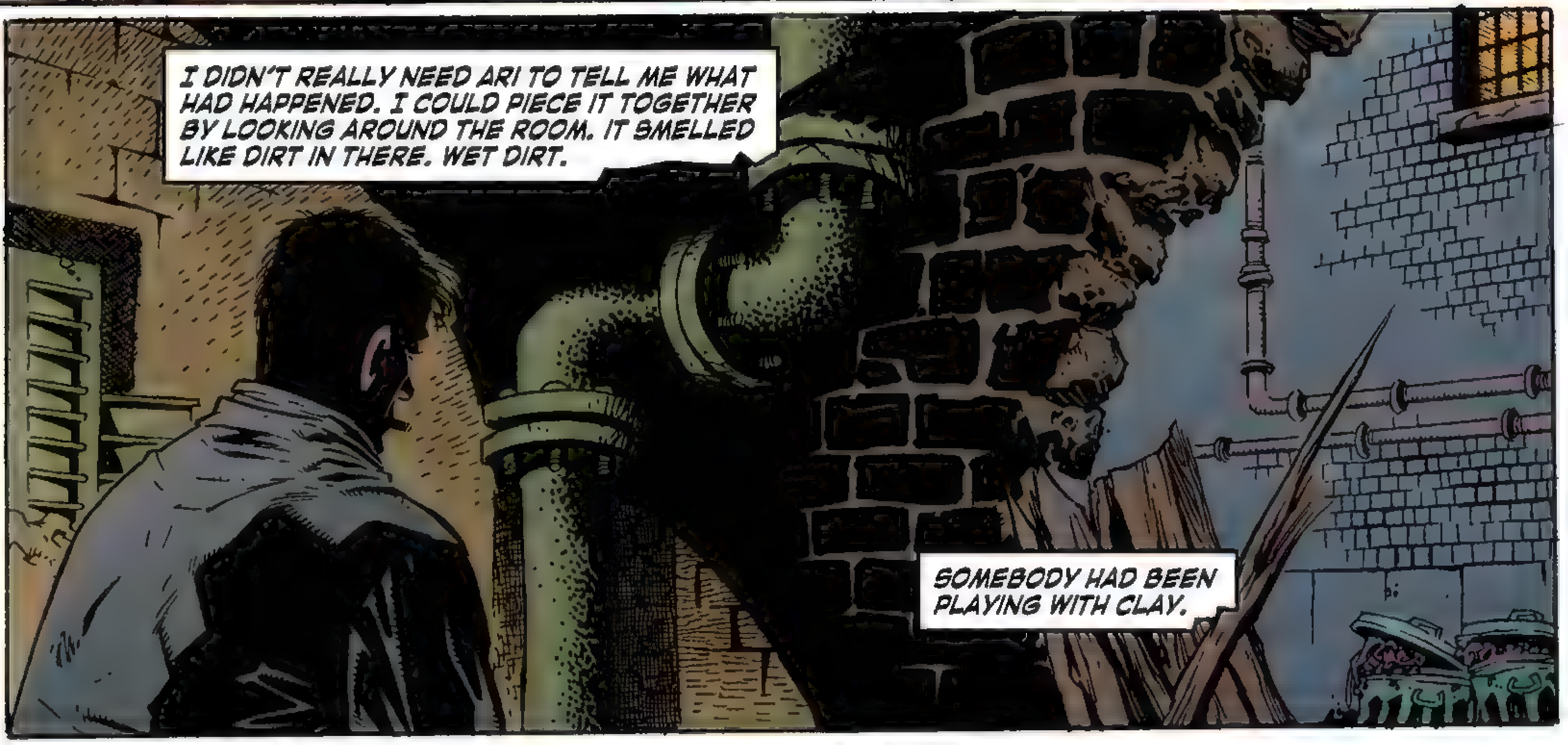

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
NOTHING.
I COULDA USED YOUR BACK-UP WITH THOSE BLOOD-SUCKERS LAST NIGHT.
MY FELLOW GHOULS AND I SCOURED THE TUNNELS FOR THE MISSING GIRL ... WE FOUND ONLY BLOODY CLOTHES.
SHIT. FIGURES.
IS IT MY IMAGINATION OR HAVE THINGS BEEN GETTING WORSE AROUND HERE?
INDEED THEY ARE. MS. LYNCH AND YOUR FRIEND ... *DEPARTING* ARE A PART OF A MUCH LARGER DARKNESS COMING YOUR WAY.
REALLY KNOW HOW TO CHEER A GUY UP, DON'T YA?
I CANNOT LIE ABOUT THE COMING DARKNESS.
ALL RIGHT. GOT IT. THANK YOU.
MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL. UNPACK. SEE IF YOU CAN MAKE THE PLACE LIVABLE.
I WILL DO MY BEST.
FUCKIN' GHOUL.
HE WAS ALWAYS YAMMERING ABOUT ONE BAD THING COMING OR ANOTHER.
PROBLEM WAS, AND WHAT HAD ME SPOOKED WAS ... MOST OF THE TIME HE WAS RIGHT.

ARI GREEN'S PLACE TURNED OUT TO BE A SPOT I KNEW. IT WAS AN APARTMENT BEHIND GREEN'S DINER. I'D EATEN A SLOPPY MESS OF EGGS AND POTATOES AT GREEN'S ON MORE THAN A FEW LONG NIGHTS.
QUOR
Green's Diner
WATCH RE
AND THAT MEANT I KNEW BYRON AS WELL. HE SERVED AS THE HOST OF THE PLACE AND WOULD OCCASIONALLY STOP BY TABLES FOR SMALL TALK AND MENU ADVICE.
BUT THIS GUY WASN'T BYRON. BYRON'S PLACE. NO BYRON. TEN BUCKS, BYRON'S DEAD.
EXCUSE ME, SIR? THERE IS NO SMOKING ALLOWED INSIDE...WELL, ANYWHERE IN LOS ANGELES, SO I'D REALLY APPRECIATE IT IF--
I REMEMBER ONE OF THE FIRST TIMES I ATE THERE, BYRON CAME OVER AND TALKED TO ME. I WAS SICK AND FUCKED-UP, ON SOME BAD CRAP I'D DROPPED, AND HE SENT OVER SOUP AND COFFEE FOR ME.
IS TODAY REALLY THE DAY YOU WANT TO DIE? IF NOT, TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND ARI GREEN.
O... OUT B... BACK.
EVERY TIME AFTER THAT BYRON GAVE ME A KNOWING SMILE. I LIKED HIM. I WASN'T IN THE MOOD TO HEAR BAD NEWS ABOUT SOMEBODY I LIKED, BUT IT APPEARED I WAS IN FOR A LOAD.
YOU MUST BE CAL MCDONALD. THANK YOU FOR COMING.
ARI GREEN. BYRON'S BROTHER. I GOT THE SAME VIBE HIS BROTHER GAVE OFF--FRIENDLY, SMART, BUT AN UNDERCURRENT OF SUSPICION.
THAT'S ME...
... AND YOUR METER'S RUNNING SO LET'S GET TO IT. TELL ME ABOUT YOUR BROTHER'S PROBLEM.

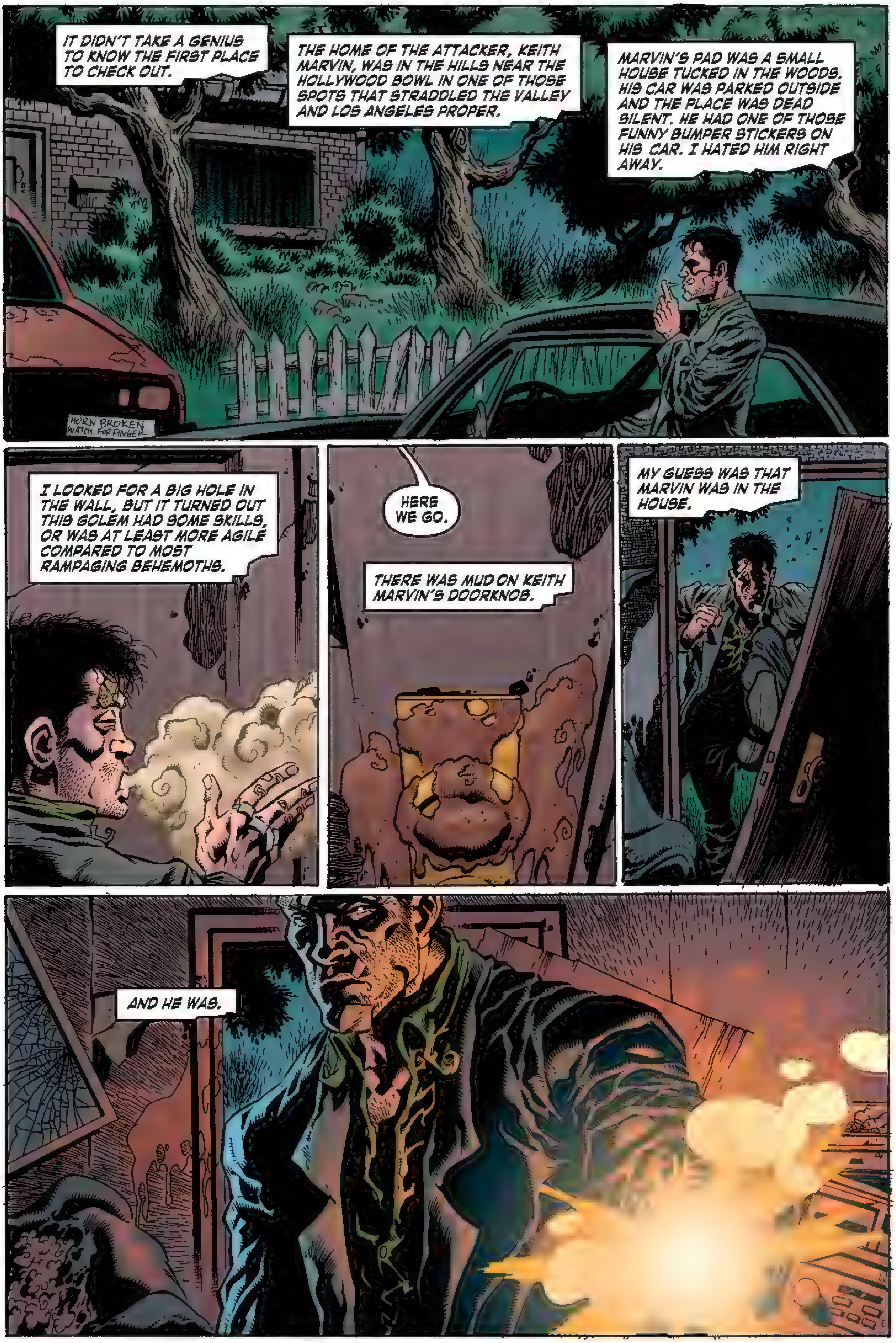
BYRON WAS A GOOD, HONEST MAN. NEVER HURT A SOUL IN HIS LIFE, BUT LAST YEAR HIS DAUGHTER WAS ... ATTACKED BY A MAN SHE KNEW. THE MAN WAS ARRESTED AND BYRON LOOKED FORWARD TO *JUSTICE* BEING SERVED.
BUT IT *WASN'T,* I'M GUESSING.
NO. IT WASN'T. ALL BECAUSE OF A MISTAKE MADE DURING HIS ARREST, THE CASE WAS THROWN OUT, AND THIS MAN WHO HARMED MY NIECE WAS FREE TO WALK THE SAME STREETS AS YOU AND I!
PERV GOT A NAME?
KEITH MARVIN, HIS NAME WAS. BASTARD.
YOU WANT I SHOULD PUT THE HURT ON HIM?
I AM AFRAID, MR. MCDONALD, MY BROTHER MAY HAVE ALREADY DONE JUST THAT.
YOU LOST ME. YOUR BROTHER IS DEAD, I TAKE IT.
AND STILL, THIS IS TRUE.


ARI GREEN SHOWED ME A ROOM IN THE BASEMENT OF HIS BROTHER'S HOUSE THAT DIDN'T SEEM QUITE RIGHT.
IT LOOKED LIKE A NORMAL WORKSHOP, YOU KNOW FOR HANDYMAN BULLSHIT, BUT THE SMELL IN THE AIR WAS LIKE ... MUD.


HAVE YOU HEARD OF AN ANCIENT BEING KNOWN AS A *GOLEM?*
HEARD OF 'EM. CAN'T SAY I'VE EVER ACTUALLY SEEN ONE.
WELL, IF YOU TAKE MY CASE ... YOU WILL SOON.

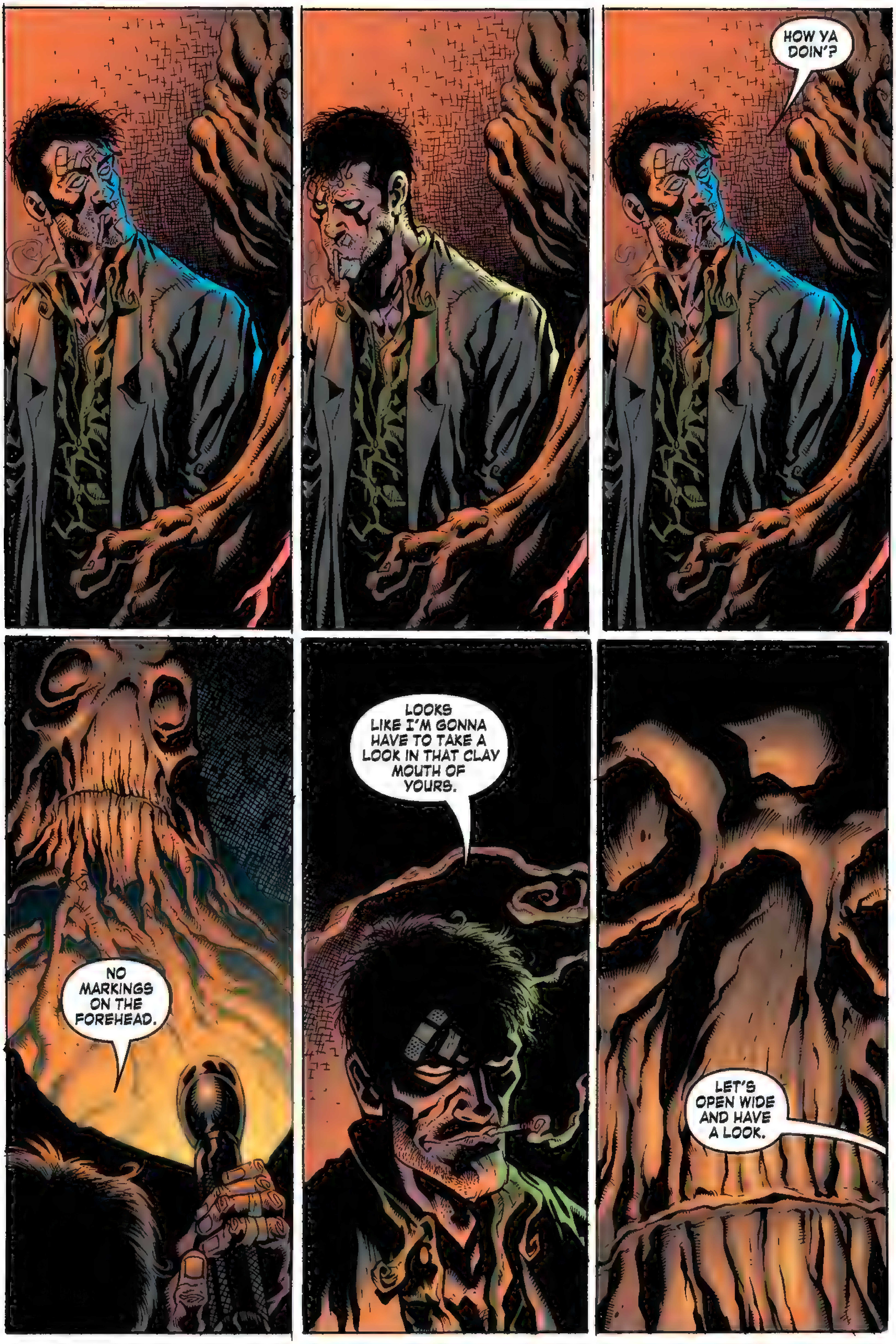

I DIDN'T REALLY NEED ARI TO TELL ME WHAT HAD HAPPENED. I COULD PIECE IT TOGETHER BY LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM. IT SMELLED LIKE DIRT IN THERE. WET DIRT.
SOMEBODY HAD BEEN PLAYING WITH CLAY.

BYRON WAS A VERY RELIGIOUS MAN, AND WHEN JUSTICE WAS NOT SERVED HE TOOK IT UPON HIMSELF.
YOU'RE SAYING BYRON CREATED A GOLEM TO GO AFTER THE GUY WHO ATTACKED HIS DAUGHTER?
EXACTLY.
DO I HAVE TO GUESS THE WHOLE FUCKIN' STORY OR ARE YOU GOING TO TELL ME?
MY BROTHER CREATED THE GOLEM... AND WAS SUCCESSFUL. THE CLAY GIANT ROSE FROM THE TABLE READY TO DO HIS BIDDING.
AND THEN?
HE WAS SO STUNNED BY THE SUCCESS OF HIS CREATION HE HAD A HEART ATTACK AND DIED RIGHT HERE IN THIS ROOM.
SO WE HAVE A GOLEM WITHOUT A MASTER *LOOSE* IN THE CITY?
YES.
ANY CLUE WHERE IT IS OR HOW TO STOP IT?
NO.
WELL THAT'S JUST FUCKIN' GREAT.


IT DIDN'T TAKE A GENIUS TO KNOW THE FIRST PLACE TO CHECK OUT.
THE HOME OF THE ATTACKER, KEITH MARVIN, WAS IN THE HILLS NEAR THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL IN ONE OF THOSE SPOTS THAT STRADDLED THE VALLEY AND LOS ANGELES PROPER.
MARVIN'S PAD WAS A SMALL HOUSE TUCKED IN THE WOODS. HIS CAR WAS PARKED OUTSIDE AND THE PLACE WAS DEAD SILENT. HE HAD ONE OF THOSE FUNNY BUMPER STICKERS ON HIS CAR. I HATED HIM RIGHT AWAY.
HORN BROKEN WATCH FOR FINGER
I LOOKED FOR A BIG HOLE IN THE WALL, BUT IT TURNED OUT THIS GOLEM HAD SOME SKILLS, OR WAS AT LEAST MORE AGILE COMPARED TO MOST RAMPAGING BEHEMOTHS.
HERE WE GO.
THERE WAS MUD ON KEITH MARVIN'S DOORKNOB.
MY GUESS WAS THAT MARVIN WAS IN THE HOUSE.
AND HE WAS.

LITERALLY.
SON-OF-A-BITCH! LOOKS LIKE BYRON GOT HIS JUSTICE.
LIKE I TOLD THE OLD DUDE, I'D NEVER DEALT WITH A GOLEM. I'VE DEALT WITH ALL SORTS OF CRAP REANIMATED AND CREATED FROM DISGUSTING SHIT, BUT THIS WAS MY FIRST TIME GOING HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH A MINDLESS GOLIATH MADE OF CLAY.
Hmmm.
I WASN'T THRILLED WITH THE PROSPECT, BUT IF I DIDN'T DEAL WITH IT, WHO WOULD? BESIDES, I HAD A PAYING CUSTOMER THIS TIME. IF I SURVIVED, I'D BE ABLE TO PAY THE FREAKING RENT.
GOLEMS COME FROM TRADITIONAL JEWISH MAGIC. IN HEBREW THE WORD GOLEM MEANS "SHAPELESS MASS."
ACCORDING TO SOME STORIES A GOLEM IS CREATED OUT OF SOIL AND THEN SOME WORDS ARE EITHER CARVED IN THE FOREHEAD, OR A PARCHMENT IS SHOVED IN THE CREATURE'S MOUTH.
IN THE CASE OF THE WORDS ON THE FOREHEAD, YOU SIMPLY ERASE THE WORDS OR CHANGE THEM TO STOP THE GOLEM. IF THE PARCHMENT IS IN THE MOUTH, IT HAS TO BE REMOVED.

BUT FIRST I'D HAVE TO FIND THE BIG CLAY BASTARD.


HOW YA DOIN'?
NO MARKINGS ON THE FOREHEAD.
LOOKS LIKE I'M GONNA HAVE TO TAKE A LOOK IN THAT CLAY MOUTH OF YOURS.
LET'S OPEN WIDE AND HAVE A LOOK.

CRASH
OR NOT.
HERE'S SOMETHING YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW.
SMASH
YOU HAVE NOT BEEN PUNCHED UNTIL YOU'VE BEEN PUNCHED BY A GOLEM.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENS FROM THE CLAY SCULPT TO THE SPELL, BUT IT MAKES THE GOLEM'S BODY FUCKING HARD. IT'S LIKE GETTING HIT BY A BUILDING.
GAH!
WHAT THE--?

HEY, IT DIDN'T SQUASH ME.
I HAD A GOLEM WITHOUT A MASTER, AN AIMLESS HUNK OF ANIMATED CLAY THAT HAD ACCOMPLISHED THE GOAL IT HAD BEEN CREATED FOR.
DORIAN
NOW WHAT WOULD IT DO? AND MORE TO THE POINT... WHERE WOULD IT GO?
PERHAPS IF YOU LET *US* HELP?
GAH!
JESUS! HOW DID YOU KNOW I WAS HERE?
I HAVE MY WAYS.
CAN YOU FIND THAT BIG BASTARD?
I CAN TRY.
THE GHOUL COMMUNITY HELPED ME ALL THE TIME, AND I HELPED THEM, SO IT WAS FAIR TRADE.
OKAY, YOU *FIND* PLAYDOUGH-BOY, BUT *I'LL* DEAL WITH HIM. I FEEL KINDA SORRY FOR THE STUPID LUMP.

I HAVE NO WISH TO HAVE A RUN-IN WITH A SOULLESS BEING.
LIKE YOU'RE ONE TO TALK.
I HAD A SOUL ONCE.
BUT CAN YOU DANCE LIKE JAMES BROWN?
JAMES *WHO?*
NEVER MIND.
MO. ONE THING BEFORE YOU GO.
YES?
BLAMM
THAT'S FOR SNEAKING UP ON ME.
SIGH

NORMALLY I'D BE OUT HOOFING IT, OR AT LEAST SEEING IF ANYBODY AT THE L.A.P.D HAD SOME INFO. A LUMBERING GOLIATH LIKE THAT WAS LIABLE TO ATTRACT SOME ATTENTION. PROBLEM WAS, IF I WALKED INTO THE STATION THEY'D PROBABLY SHOOT ME ON SIGHT.
SINCE BRUEGER'S DEATH, THE L.A.P.D HAD OFFICIALLY PLACED ME ON THEIR MOST-HATED LIST. THEY BLAMED ME.
HEY THERE, SWEETIE. YOU LOOK LIKE YOU COULD USE SOME COMPANY, AND I SURE COULD USE A DRINK.
SCRAM, SISTER. HANG WITH ME AND YOU'LL GET NOTHING BUT TROUBLE... PROBABLY GET YOURSELF KILLED.
BADA-BEEP BADA-BEEP
THAT'S MY PHONE. FUCK OFF.
HEY MO'. YOU FIND HIM? WHERE? DOWNTOWN. WHAT D'YOU MEAN, YOU *MARKED* THE SPOT? OKAY, YOU TAKE OFF. I'LL RUN DOWN THERE AND TAKE CARE OF IT. THANKS FOR THE TIP.
THIS IS FOR MY TAB AND YOU ... AND SOME EXTRA SO THE LADY CAN HAVE A COUPLE ON ME.
YOU GOT IT, CAL.
EDDY JANE. BARTENDER. THE ONE HUMAN IN LOS ANGELES WHO LIKES ME BECAUSE I PROBABLY PAY HALF HIS RENT.
I KEEP MY WORLD SMALL AND DEAD. MY ONLY REAL FRIEND IN THE WORLD IS A GHOUL NAMED MO'LOCK. HE CAN'T DIE. NOT TWICE, SO I KEEP HIM AROUND.
HEY, CAL.
JERRY.
SABRINA LYNCH IS ANOTHER TOPIC ALTOGETHER. SHE CAME INTO MY LIFE, AND WE FELL FOR EACH OTHER HARD. FOR ME, AGAINST MY BETTER JUDGMENT.

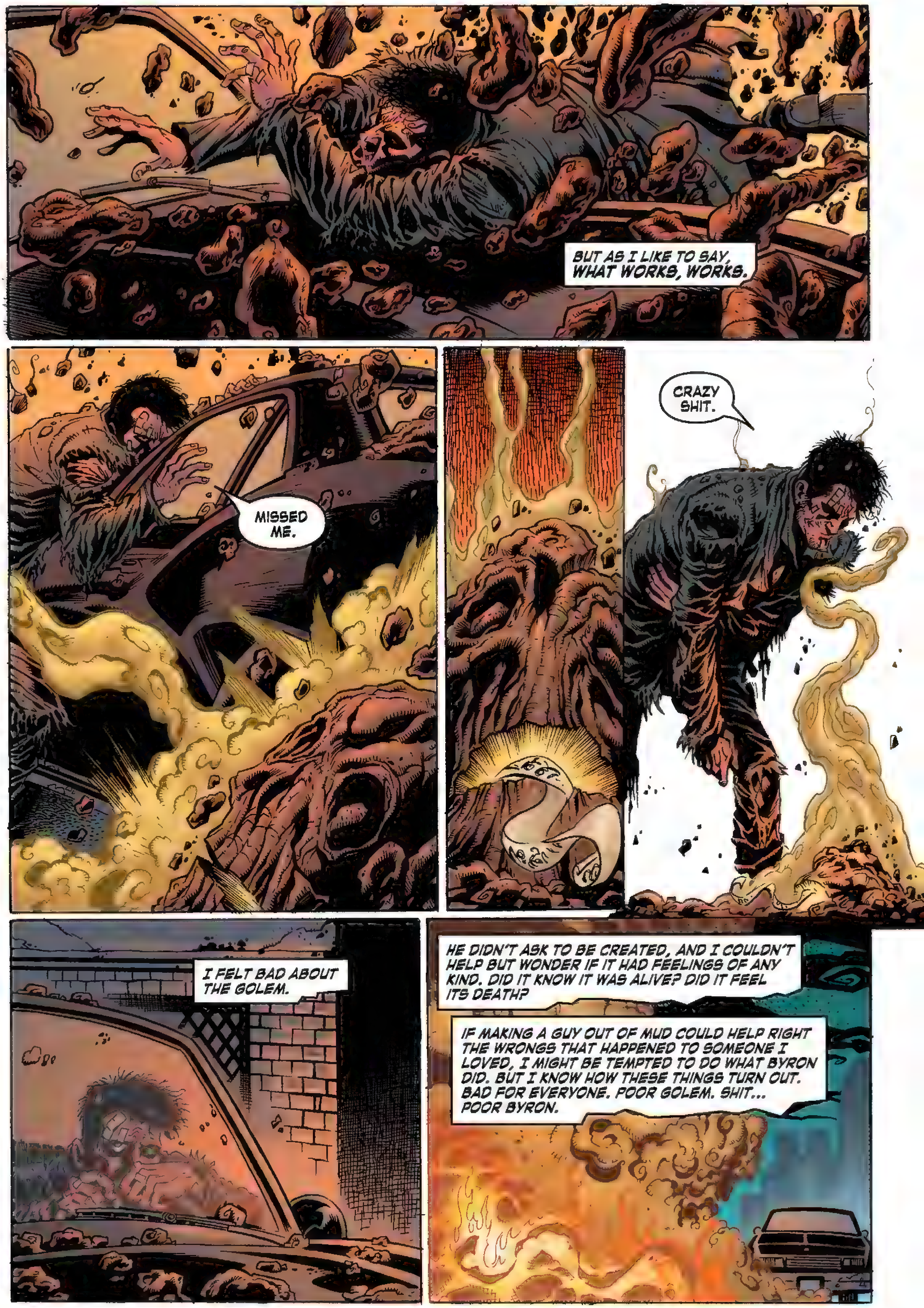
UNFORTUNATELY THE CLOSENESS MEANT SHE, LIKE EVERY HUMAN I LET IN, EVENTUALLY DECIDES SHE NEEDS TO SAVE ME FROM MYSELF.
I'M NOT A FUCKING RETARD. I KNOW I'VE GOT A FEW BAD HABITS, BUT AS LONG AS I SPEND MY NIGHTS HUNTING FREAKS WITH FANGS AND TALONS, I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO GET FUCKED UP WHENEVER I WANT TO. BESIDES, I KNOW MY LIMITS. I KICKED THE HORSE YEARS AGO AND NEVER RELAPSED.
WAY I FIGURE, IT'S FINE AS LONG AS NOBODY EXCEPT ME GETS HURT.
PROBLEM WAS, SABRINA GOT HURT, GOT SCARED, AND NOW SHE'S GONE TOO, AND I'M ON MY OWN LOOKING FOR AN ANIMATED MOUNTAIN OF MUD.
GOLEM IN HERE
HEY GOLEM, YOU IN THERE? LET'S JUST END THIS PEACEFUL LIKE AND I CAN GET SOME SLEEP TONIGHT.
SHIT.

LOOK, GOLEM. YOU DID YOUR THING. YOU KILLED THE PERV THAT ASSAULTED BYRON GREEN'S GIRL AND NOW IT'S TIME TO RETURN TO THE EARTH, OR WHATEVER THE FUCK YOU CALL IT. WHAT D'YA SAY?
AAAAAH!
THE GOLEM WORKED ME OVER LIKE A SLAB OF BONELESS CHICKEN. I WAS NOTHING TO HIM, JUST ANOTHER OBSTACLE IN HIS WAY, BUT IT DIDN'T STOP HIM FROM DELIVERING A POUNDING THAT SNAPPED A COUPLE RIBS AND ALMOST DISLOCATED MY JAW.
IF I WASN'T HOPPED UP ON PAINKILLERS I MIGHT HAVE SQUAWKED, BUT I TOOK EVERY PUNCH AND JUST ROLLED ON THE PAVEMENT LIKE A GOOD PUNCHING BAG.
I COULD HAVE JUST STEPPED ASIDE AND LET THE BEHEMOTH WANDER OFF, LET IT BECOME SOMEBODY ELSE'S PROBLEM, BUT I'D WIND UP HAVING TO STEP IN EVENTUALLY ANYWAY.
BY THE TIME THE 'TARDS IN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT FIGURED OUT WHAT THEY WERE DEALING WITH, THEY STILL WOULDN'T ACCEPT IT, STILL WOULDN'T DO WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE, AND WHO KNOWS HOW MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE WOULD GET HURT.

I WASN'T ABOUT TO STICK MY HAND IN THAT MOUTH.
WHAT I NEEDED WAS TO SLOW HIM DOWN.
EASIER SAID THAN DONE.
EITHER WAY, I NEEDED A BIG HOLE IN THAT LUMBERING BASTARD.
HEY, LUMPY!
BOOM
THAT SHOULD BE BIG ENOUGH.

SHNK
SEE YA! WOULDN'T WANNA BE YA!
GURRK!
AW, SHIT.

AS PLANS GO, I'D HAD BETTER.
AAAAAAAAAAH!
KA-BOOM


BUT AS I LIKE TO SAY, WHAT WORKS, WORKS.
MISSED ME.
CRAZY SHIT.
I FELT BAD ABOUT THE GOLEM.
HE DIDN'T ASK TO BE CREATED, AND I COULDN'T HELP BUT WONDER IF IT HAD FEELINGS OF ANY KIND. DID IT KNOW IT WAS ALIVE? DID IT FEEL ITS DEATH?
IF MAKING A GUY OUT OF MUD COULD HELP RIGHT THE WRONGS THAT HAPPENED TO SOMEONE I LOVED, I MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO DO WHAT BYRON DID. BUT I KNOW HOW THESE THINGS TURN OUT. BAD FOR EVERYONE. POOR GOLEM. SHIT... POOR BYRON.

I PHONED ARI GREEN ON THE WAY HOME AND TOLD HIM THE JOB WAS DONE. HE SAID HE'D SEND ME A CHECK.
I TOLD HIM WHERE HE COULD SEE THE COMPLETED JOB IF HE WANTED TO CHECK MY WORK, BUT HE SAID HE BELIEVED ME.
WHEN I ASKED HIM WHY, HE SAID BECAUSE I BELIEVED HIM. WHATEVER.
IS IT FINISHED?
YEAH, AND SO AM I. WHERE'S MY STASH? I NEED A HIT OF EVERYTHING.
I ALSO TOLD HIM TO CALL THE COPS AND GET SOMEBODY OVER TO THE PERV'S PLACE. SOMEBODY HAD TO SCRAPE HIM OUT OF THE WALL.
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO FETCH YOUR "STASH" FOR YOU?
PLEASE. IF I MOVE MY SKIN WILL FALL OFF.
GOTTA LOVE AN ENABLING GHOUL.

WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE READING?
A FASCINATING TEXT ON THE HISTORY OF THE GOLEM. THERE IS QUITE A BIT OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE CREATURES.
THERE ARE MANY ACCOUNTS OF THE GOLEM, INCLUDING AN INCREDIBLE ONE FROM 1901 CONCERNING A GOLEM WHO PROTECTED THE PRAGUE GHETTO FROM ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS AND LATER IN POLAND DURING WORLD WAR TWO.
ANYTHING ABOUT GOLEMS WITHOUT MASTERS?
COINCIDENTALLY, THERE ARE SEVERAL REFERENCES TO THIS. EVIDENTLY IF A GOLEM'S CREATOR IS KILLED OR LOSES CONTACT WITH THE GOLEM, THE CREATURE WILL EVENTUALLY BREAK DOWN AND CEASE TO FUNCTION. FASCINATING.
WHAT WAS THAT LAST PART?
...IF A GOLEM'S CREATOR IS KILLED OR LOSES CONTACT WITH THE GOLEM, THE CREATURE WILL EVENTUALLY BREAK DOWN AND CEASE TO FUNCTION.
THAT A FACT?
YES, IT IS. TOO BAD YOU DIDN'T READ THIS BEFORE YOU WENT OUT.

IS THAT A NEW SHIRT?
YES. AND THE JACKET.
BLAMM
KO
THE END

TWO RED EYES

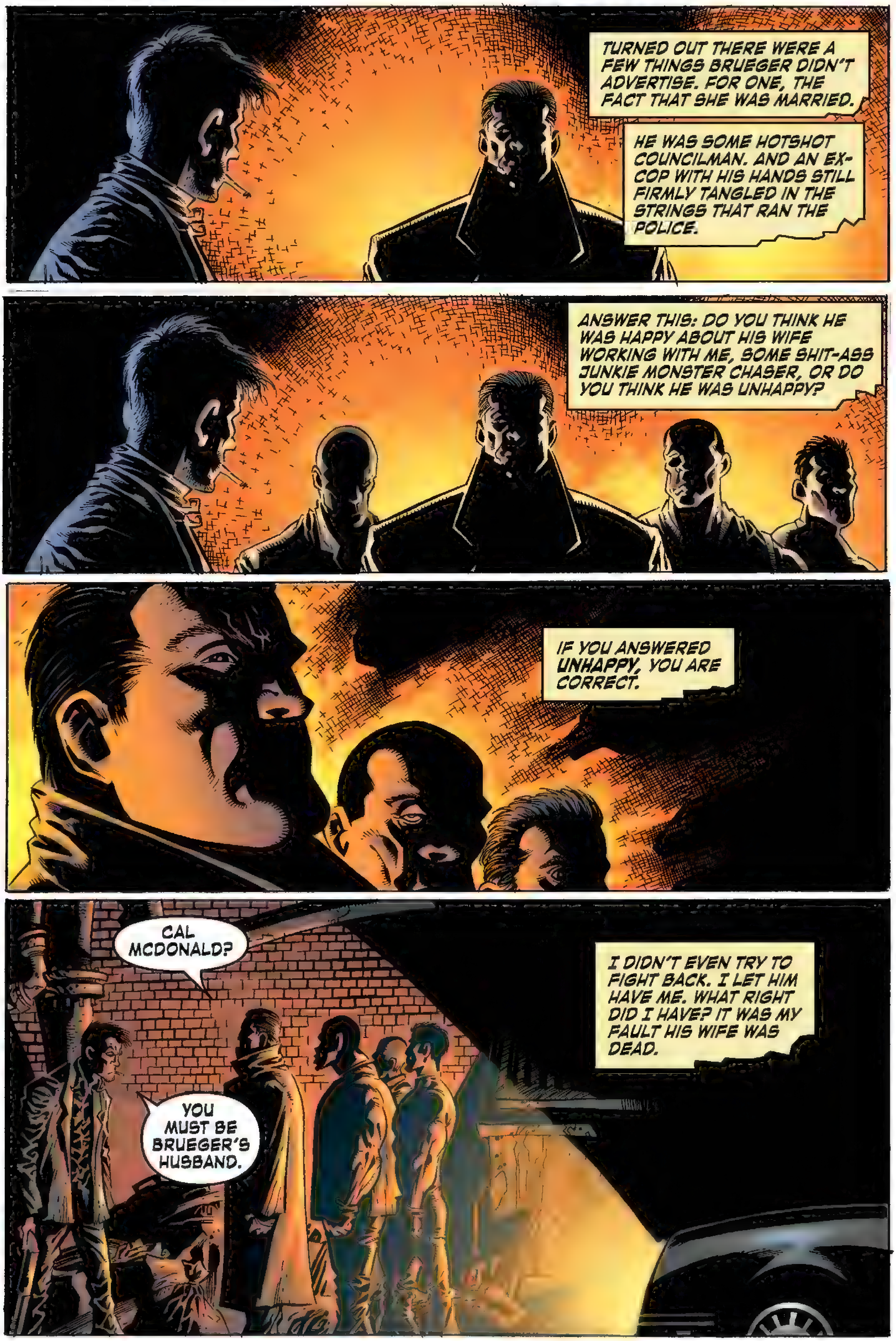
story
STEVE NILES

art
KYLE HOTZ

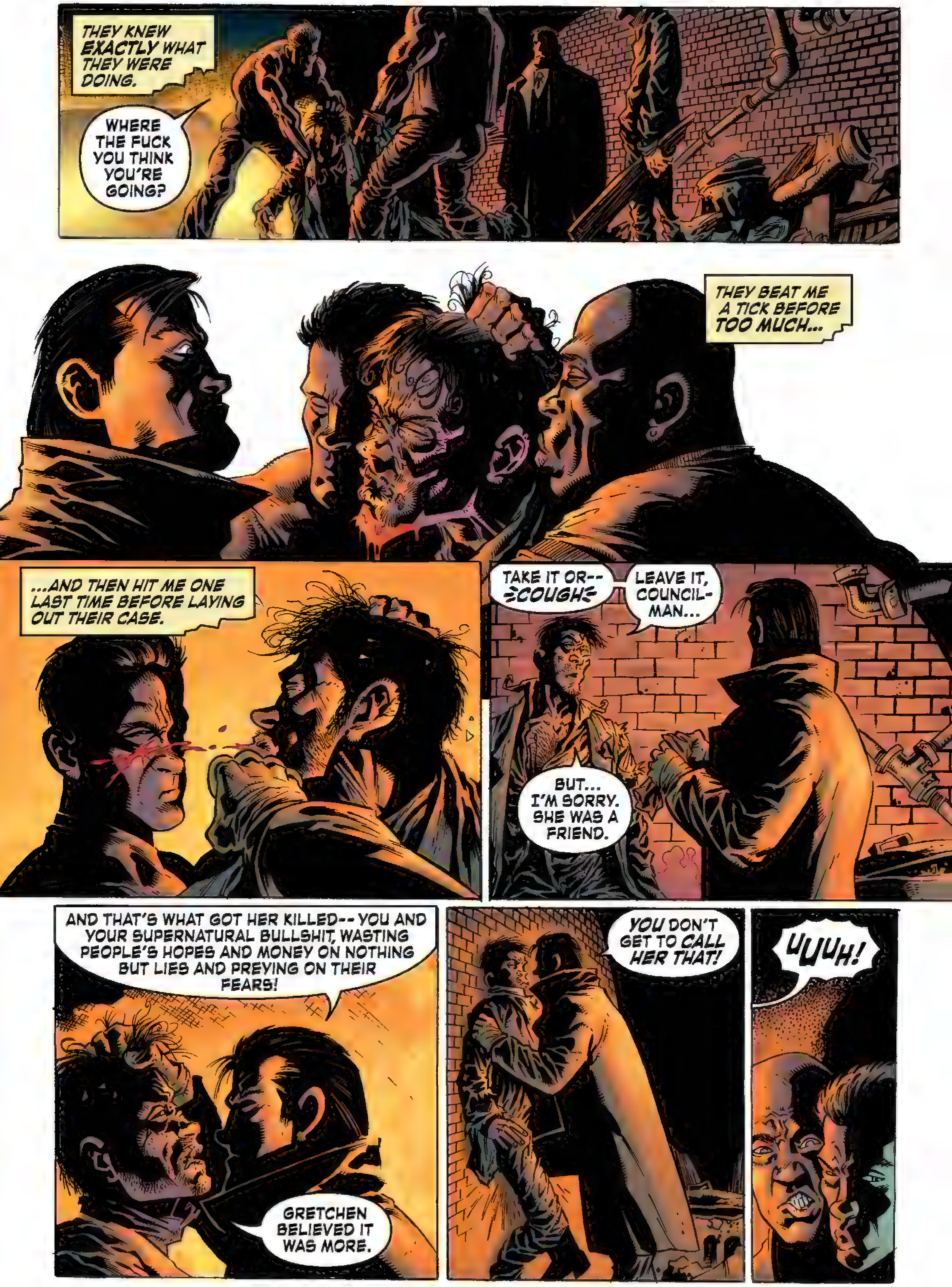
colors
MICHELLE MADSEN

letters
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®

AS WEEKS WENT, I'D HAD BETTER.
I'D MURDERED ONE OF MY ARCHENEMIES IN COLD BLOOD, BUT HE WAS SUCH A SICK BASTARD I DOUBT THEY'LL PRESS CHARGES.
I'M ALSO PRETTY SURE NOBODY SAW ME.
YESTERDAY I WATCHED THE FUNERAL OF ONE OF MY ONLY FRIENDS, MURDERED BY THE MAN I KILLED.
SHE WAS TORTURED AND DIED OF SHOCK. MAYBE IT WAS HORROR. HER HEART JUST GAVE OUT.
HER NAME WAS BRUEGER. I WATCHED HER GET BURIED FROM THE WOODS OUTSIDE THE CEMETERY. SHE WAS A COP AND THEY KNOW HOW AND WHY SHE DIED--AND BECAUSE OF WHO.
IT WAS MY FAULT POLYNICE WENT AFTER HER. HE DID IT TO GET AT ME. IT WORKED.
THEY'RE COMING FOR ME.


TURNED OUT THERE WERE A FEW THINGS BRUEGER DIDN'T ADVERTISE. FOR ONE, THE FACT THAT SHE WAS MARRIED.
HE WAS SOME HOTSHOT COUNCILMAN. AND AN EX-COP WITH HIS HANDS STILL FIRMLY TANGLED IN THE STRINGS THAT RAN THE POLICE.
ANSWER THIS: DO YOU THINK HE WAS HAPPY ABOUT HIS WIFE WORKING WITH ME, SOME SHIT-ASS JUNKIE MONSTER CHASER, OR DO YOU THINK HE WAS UNHAPPY?
IF YOU ANSWERED UNHAPPY, YOU ARE CORRECT.
CAL MCDONALD?
YOU MUST BE BRUEGER'S HUSBAND.
I DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO FIGHT BACK. I LET HIM HAVE ME. WHAT RIGHT DID I HAVE? IT WAS MY FAULT HIS WIFE WAS DEAD.

I DESERVED EVERY FUCKING INCH OF BRUISED SKIN, EVERY MILLIMETER OF TORN FLESH, OF CRUSHED NERVE.
HE ONLY DID WHAT I WISH I COULD.
I WISHED I'D DIE. I WISHED WHATEVER KEPT ME GOING WOULD STOP.
BUT I KNEW I WOULDN'T.
I'D LIVE EVERY FUCKING MISERABLE MOMENT OF THIS, AND IT WAS COMPLETELY INTENTIONAL.


THEY KNEW EXACTLY WHAT THEY WERE DOING.
WHERE THE FUCK YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
THEY BEAT ME A TICK BEFORE TOO MUCH...
...AND THEN HIT ME ONE LAST TIME BEFORE LAYING OUT THEIR CASE.
TAKE IT OR-- *COUGH*
LEAVE IT, COUNCILMAN...
BUT... I'M SORRY. SHE WAS A FRIEND.
AND THAT'S WHAT GOT HER KILLED-- YOU AND YOUR SUPERNATURAL BULLSHIT, WASTING PEOPLE'S HOPES AND MONEY ON NOTHING BUT LIES AND PREYING ON THEIR FEARS!
GRETCHEN BELIEVED IT WAS MORE.
YOU DON'T GET TO CALL HER THAT!
UUUH!

YOU'RE CUT OFF. IF YOU STEP INSIDE A POLICE STATION, OR ANY BUILDING OR STREET, IN MY DISTRICT, YOU WILL BE ARRESTED. IF YOU HAVE CONTACT WITH ANY LAW-ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL, YOU WILL BE ARRESTED.
I THINK I'VE MADE MY POSITION CLEAR. IF OUR PATHS CROSS AGAIN...
I'LL SHOW *YOU* WHAT SCARY IS.
PTOO
YOU CAN COME OUT NOW.

WE COULD NOT HELP YOU. YOU KNOW WE CAN'T ENGAGE HUMANS, ESPECIALLY LAW-ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.
I KNOW, JE'EM. WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO GET YOUR DEAD, NO-LIFE HANDS DIRTY.
I'M GLAD YOU SEE MY POINT, CAL MCDONALD.
I CAME AS SOON AS I COULD. WHAT'S HAPPENED?
TURNS OUT BRUEGER HAD A HUSBAND. LET'S JUST *CHOKE* SAY HE'S NOT MY BIGGEST FAN.
IF I COULD HAVE BEEN HERE I WOULD HAVE--
I KNOW YOU WOULD HAVE, BUDDY. I KNOW.
CAN WE GET ME TO A HOSPITAL? I THINK MY SPLEEN JUST FELL OUT.
SHOULD I CALL SABRINA IN SAN FRANCISCO? PERHAPS SHE WOULD WANT TO KNOW.
SHE DOESN'T GIVE A SHIT. SHE LEFT, REMEMBER?
TAKE ME TO A VETERINARIAN. I DON'T CARE, JUST GET SOMEBODY TO SEW MY ASS UP AND GIVE ME SOME FUCKING PILLS.
I WILL TAKE YOU MYSELF.
HEH, HEH. YEAH, YEAH.

MISS LYNCH. YOU CAME BACK.
HOW IS HE?
BAD... HE HAS BEEN DAMAGED WORSE, OF COURSE, BUT I THINK HIS SPIRIT HAS TAKEN A BLOW AS WELL.

WHAT ARE THE DOCTORS SAYING?
I DO NOT KNOW. THEY HAVE NOT SPOKEN TO ME. THE LIVING HAVE A WAY OF NOT NOTICING THE DEAD.
YEAH, WELL, YOU GOTTA HAVE SOME IDEA!
I BELIEVE CAL WILL SURVIVE, PULL THROUGH, MA'AM. I AM SORRY. I DID NOT MEAN TO ALARM YOU.
I'M GOING TO GO SEE HIM AND ASK WHAT'S GOING ON.
I'LL BE NEAR IF YOU NEED ME.

THANKS.
NEVER GET USED TO THAT.
...JESUS...

JE'EM. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE? I HAVE ALL THE SECURITY FORCES I REQUIRE TO KEEP CAL SAFE.
THERE IS ANOTHER REASON I HAVE COME.
36
THIS IS PA'TTON. HE WAS WALKED ALL THE WAY FROM WASHINGTON D.C. WITH A MESSAGE FROM THE RESIDENT GHOULS.
PA'TTON, THIS IS MO'LOCK, THE CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF CAL MCDONALD.
IT IS A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, BROTHER.
THERE ARE FEW WHO ARE UNAWARE OF MO'LOCK.
I AM AMONG THE LAST OF THE GHOULS TO LEAVE WASHINGTON. I HEAR THE SAME EXODUS HAS OCCURRED THROUGHOUT THE EAST COAST.
EXODUS OF GHOULS? WHERE ARE THEY ALL GOING?
THEY ARE ALL COMING HERE... TO *CAL MCDONALD.*

I LEFT YOU A MESSAGE. I LEFT IT ON THE PHONE AT THE HOUSE THAT GOT LEVELED WHEN LIEUTENANT BRUEGER WAS KILLED.
LOOK AT YOU.
I KNOW, IN THAT BIG, STUBBORN HEAD OF YOURS, YOU THINK I LEFT YOU BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID OF GETTING KILLED. BUT IT'S THE OTHER WAY AROUND. I DIDN'T WANT TO SIT AND WAIT FOR YOU TO GET KILLED OR KILL YOURSELF OR SOME BIZARRE DRUG-INDUCED COMBINATION OF THE TWO.
I WAS GETTING TO THE POINT WHERE I COULDN'T HANDLE THE THOUGHT OF YOU DYING, AND YOU GAVE ME TOO MANY REASONS TO WORRY. YOU THINK YOU'RE BIG AND BRAVE, BUT THE TRUTH IS YOU'RE A SUICIDAL MANIAC.
I WOULD HAVE STAYED IN L.A. WITH YOU, IF I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO LIVE. I'M NOT SURE YOU DO.

AHH!
CAL, NO! PLEASE! I WANT TO LEAVE!
I WANT TO LEAVE!
SKRUCH

AHHHHHH!
SORRY.
AT LEAST TELL ME YOU *HEARD* WHAT I SAID.
SAID WHEN?
WHEN YOU WERE PRETENDING TO BE UNCONSCIOUS, RIGHT BEFORE YOU *RIPPED MY ARM OFF!*
I *SAID* I WAS SORRY, SABRINA. FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I FEEL LIKE WE WERE GOOD TOGETHER... BUT I GET IT.
YOU MIGHT WANT TO GET THAT LOOKED AT, HON.
YOU KNOW ANYBODY WHO CAN SEW IT BACK ON?
YEAH-- POLYNICE, BUT I KILLED HIM. SORRY.
OH, THAT REMINDS ME, CAL. I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU.
PLOTCH

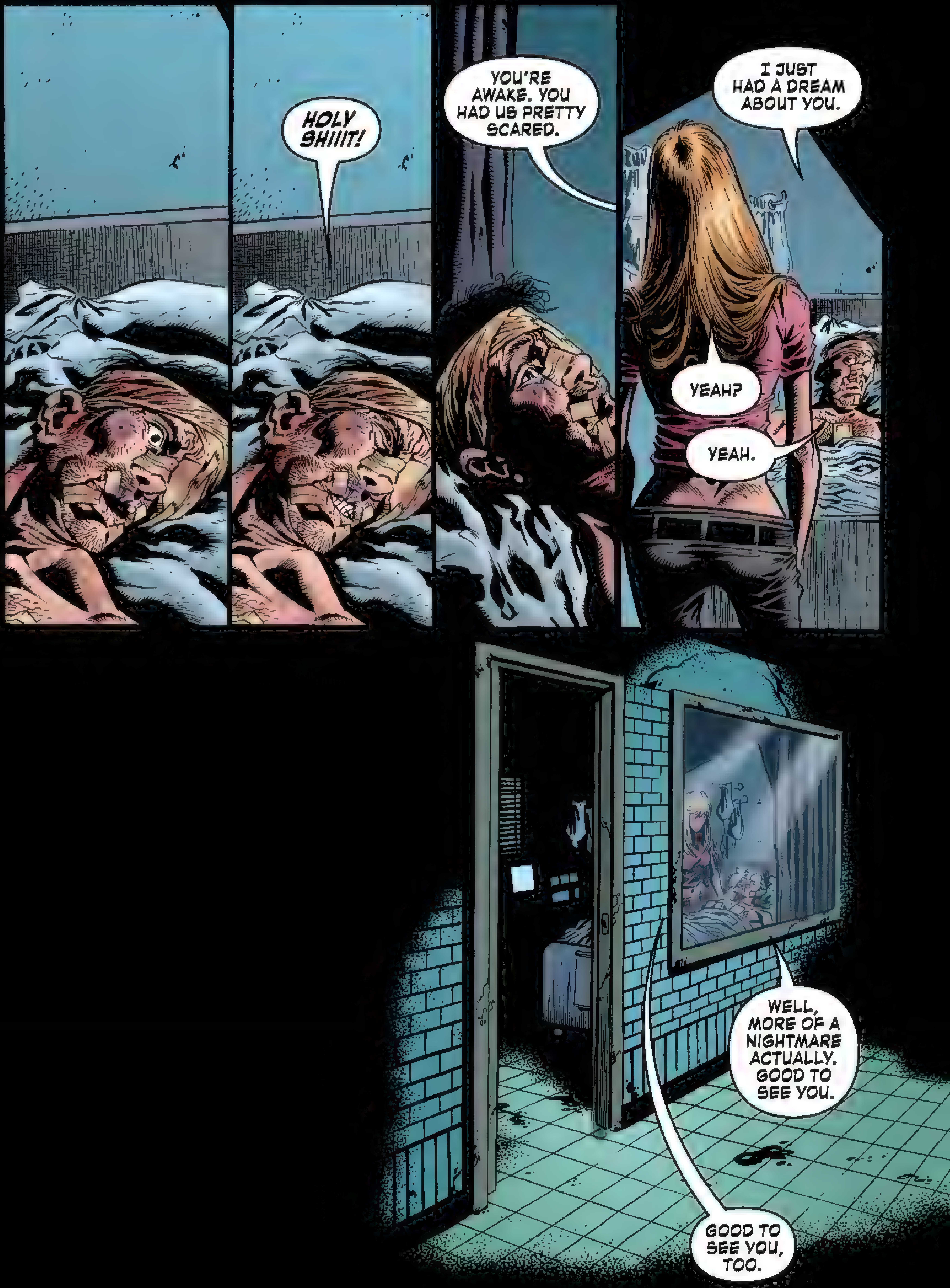
MORE HAVE COME.
THERE IS NEWS, BROTHERS.
MY NAME IS SHAW'NA. THERE IS A GREAT DARKNESS COMING.
WE KNOW.
COMING FROM EUROPE. VERY OLD EVIL. HEADING FOR THE COAST OF CALIFORNIA.
WHERE?
CAN YOU TAKE ME THERE?
SANTA MONICA.
IT WOULD BE MY HONOR TO GUIDE THE FAMOUS MO'LOCK, FRIEND OF CAL MCDONALD.
WE'VE GOT TROUBLE.
WHY ARE THEY NOT WEARING CLOTHES?
HOW ODD.
THEY ARE LYCANTHROPE.
COME FOR CAL.
DOGS SNIFFING WOUNDED PREY.

AAHRROOOO!
SPLORCH
I BELIEVE *THAT* ONE IS HEADING TOWARDS YOUR FRIEND.
Ah, THANK YOU.

OHHH!
WHAT WAS THAT SOUND?
CAL. HE IS TRYING TO WAKE.
THIS SITUATION IS UNDER CONTROL. I WILL TAKE YOU TO SANTA MONICA NOW?
IF THAT IS WHERE THE EVIL IS LANDING, I WILL CHECK IT OUT UNTIL CAL IS BACK AND AWAKE.

GLUUUUURGLE BLAAAARG GURRRRRRR!
AHHHHHHHH SHIT!

THE DARKNESS IS UPON YOUUUU!
YOU HAVE SURVIVED FAR TOO LONG, CAL MCDONALD. YOUR ODDS OF SURVIVAL ARE SHRINKING. THE CREATURES OF DARKNESS WILL DEFEAT YOU.
THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO DIE, CAL MCDONALD!
BLOORCH


HOLY SHIIIT!
YOU'RE AWAKE. YOU HAD US PRETTY SCARED.
I JUST HAD A DREAM ABOUT YOU.
YEAH?
YEAH.
WELL, MORE OF A NIGHTMARE ACTUALLY. GOOD TO SEE YOU.
GOOD TO SEE YOU, TOO.

WHY ARE WE HERE?
THIS IS WHERE THE PRESENCE IS COMING FROM.
THERE, ON THE OCEAN.
WHAT IS IT?
WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S HUGE.
PIER'S CLOSED, YOU TWO. YOU'RE TRESPASSING. SCRAM OR I'LL WRITE YOU UP!
OH... MY...GOD... IT AIN'T GONNA STOP.
I DO NOT BELIEVE SO.

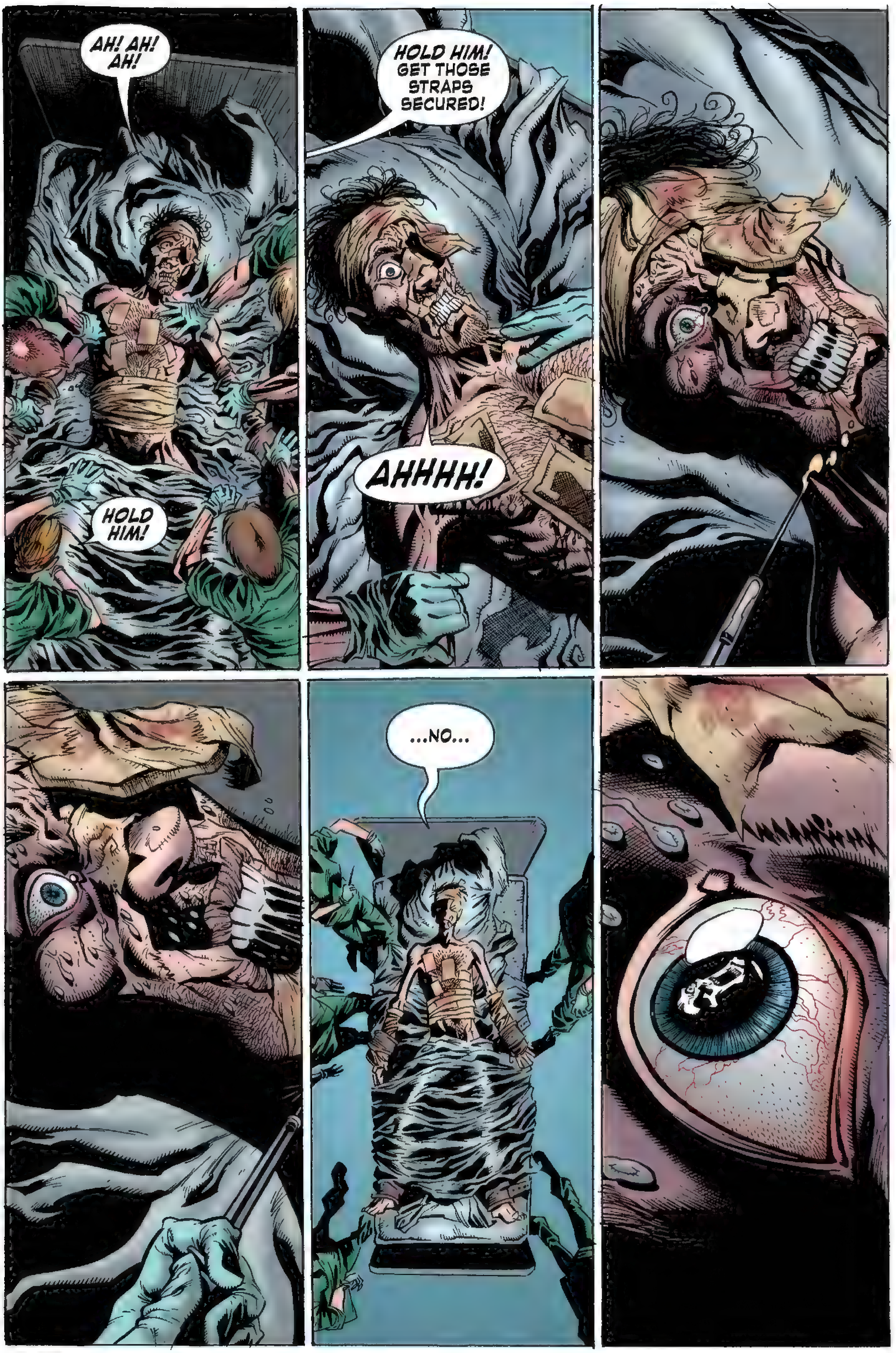
SPLASH

THE AREA FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE SANTA MONICA PIER.
UNTIL FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO, THE SANTA MONICA PIER WAS ONE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LEADING TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.
NOW, AFTER A PHANTOM FREIGHTER CAME FROM THE MIST AND SLAMMED INTO THE PIER, IT IS ALL BUT RUBBLE.
Pacific Park
SANTA MONICA PIER

SKRKKKK TEAM LEADER, THIS IS GO SQUAD. THE SHIP APPEARS EMPTY. I REPEAT--
SKRKKKK THERE ARE NO PASSENGERS ABOARD. OUT.
ROGER THAT. THIS IS TEAM LEADER. PROCEED WITH TEAM. OUT.
ROGER THAT, TEAM LEADER. WE ARE PROCEEDING INTO THE SHIP. STAND BY. OUT.
SKRTCH SKRTCH
KEEP ALERT, TEAM! SHIPS DON'T DRIVE THEMSELVES. THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMEBODY ON THIS THING.
OKAY, WILKES, SANCHEZ, SILVA. I WANT THESE DOORS OPEN. MOVE! MOVE! MOVE!
SKRTCH SKRTCH
CREEEEEAK
WHAT'S THAT SOUND?
QUIT THE YAKKING. OPEN THESE DOORS NOW!

KA-KLIK
SCREE
SCREE
HOLY CHRIST!
SCREE
THERE'S A MILLION OF 'EM!
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
MMRRRGH!
WE GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!
BUDDA
BUDDA

AAAAWWWWGH!
AAAGH!
JESUS! CAL?
WHAT'S HAPPENING?! WHAT ARE THEY DOING TO HIM?!
THEY'VE TAKEN HIM OFF THE MORPHINE DRIP. HE HAS A LOT OF JUNK IN HIS SYSTEM ALREADY--BOOZE, VICODIN...
...HE'S GOING THROUGH WITHDRAWAL.


AH! AH! AH!
HOLD HIM!
HOLD HIM! GET THOSE STRAPS SECURED!
AHHHH!
...NO...

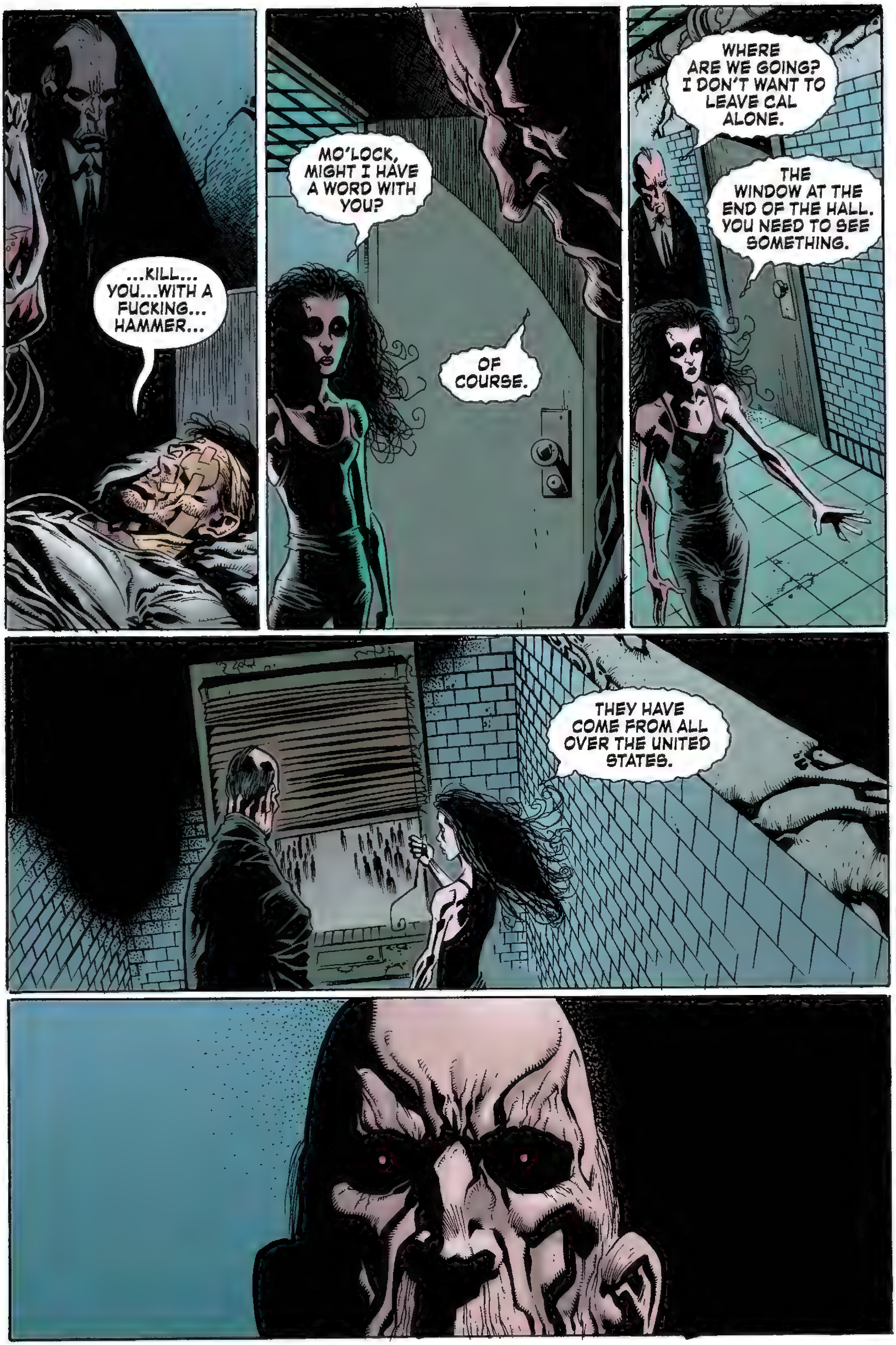
Aw...GOD. I'M GONNA THROW UP.
VOMITING IS A HOBBY OF YOURS, ISN'T IT, CAL?
MOM? DAD? IS THAT YOU, STEPHIE, BABY? YOU'RE ALL GROWN UP.
I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO SEE WHAT I WOULD HAVE BECOME WITH A BROTHER LIKE YOU. I'M LUCKY I DIED WITH MOM AND DAD, I GUESS.
SEE WHAT DRUGS LEAD TO, CALVIN?
YOU WERE *SUPPOSED* TO BE A POLICE OFFICER.
YOU'RE DEAD! ALL OF YOU! KEEP AWAY FROM ME!
A DEAD MAN IS THE ONLY FRIEND YOU HAVE IN THE WORLD, CAL. WHAT DOES THAT TELL YOU ABOUT YOUR LIFE?
THAT NICE POLICEWOMAN BRUEGER IS DEAD BECAUSE OF YOU. THANK GOODNESS SABRINA LYNCH WISED UP AND LEFT YOU.
STOP!
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE! I'M SORRY!
MMMMGHGHG!

NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO...

NO, NO, NO.
...NO... STOP... PLEASE...
REST, MY FRIEND, REST.
IT WILL PASS.

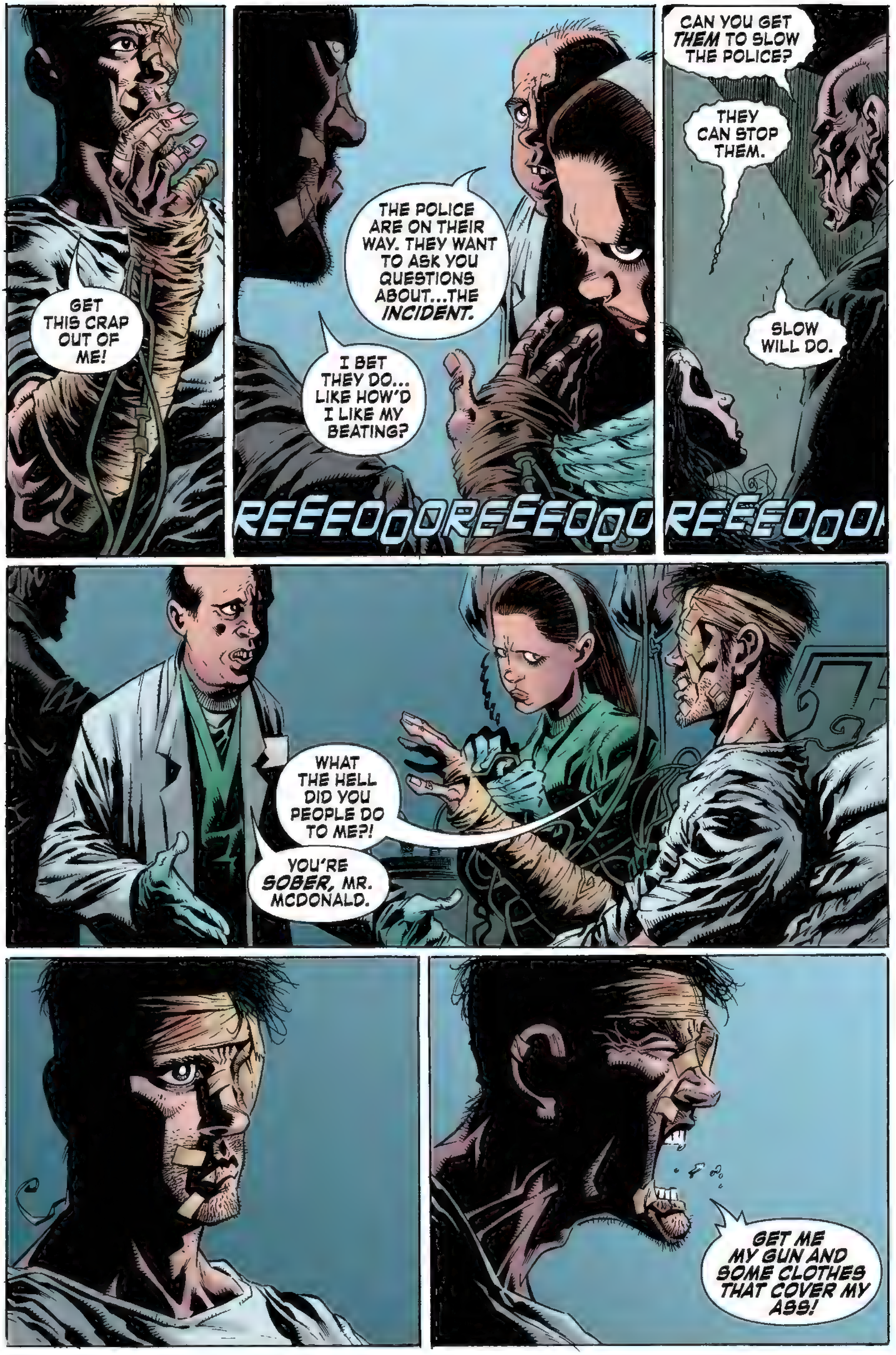
YOU ARE DEPARTING AGAIN, MS. LYNCH?
Yeah. IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S OKAY. MAYBE IT'S BETTER IF I'M NOT HERE WHEN HE WAKES UP AGAIN.
I UNDERSTAND. I WILL EXPLAIN IT TO HIM.
TAKE CARE OF HIM FOR ME, YOU BIG FREAK.
I WILL, MS. LYNCH.
AND YOU *TEXT MESSAGE* ME WHEN HE'S UP AND AROUND AND BACK TO BEING A ONE-MAN-ARMY PHARMACY, OKAY?
EXIT

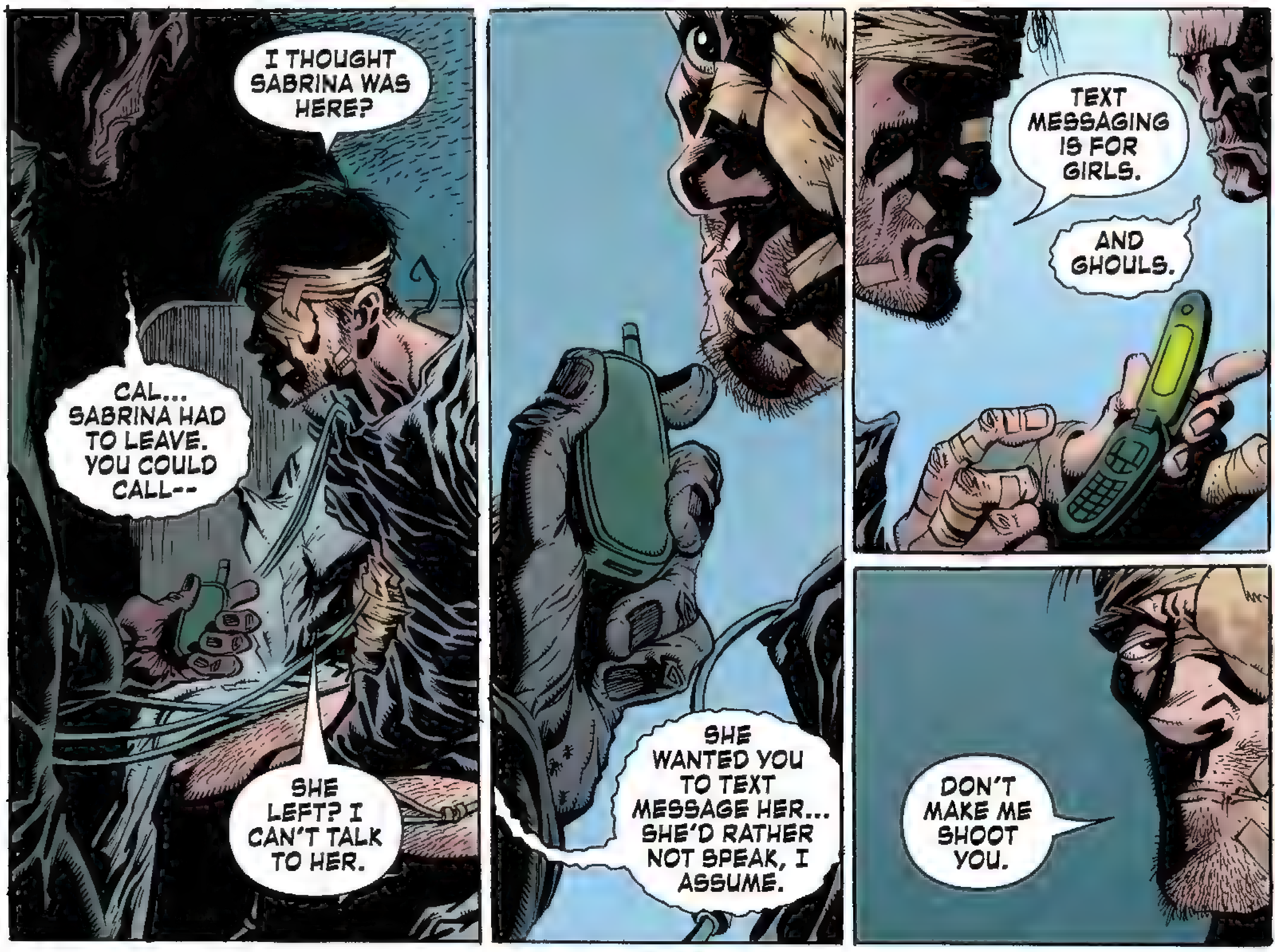
WHERE TO?
AIRPORT.
TERMINAL?
FRISCO AIR.
YOU OKAY, MISS?
JUST GET ME OUT OF THIS MADHOUSE.

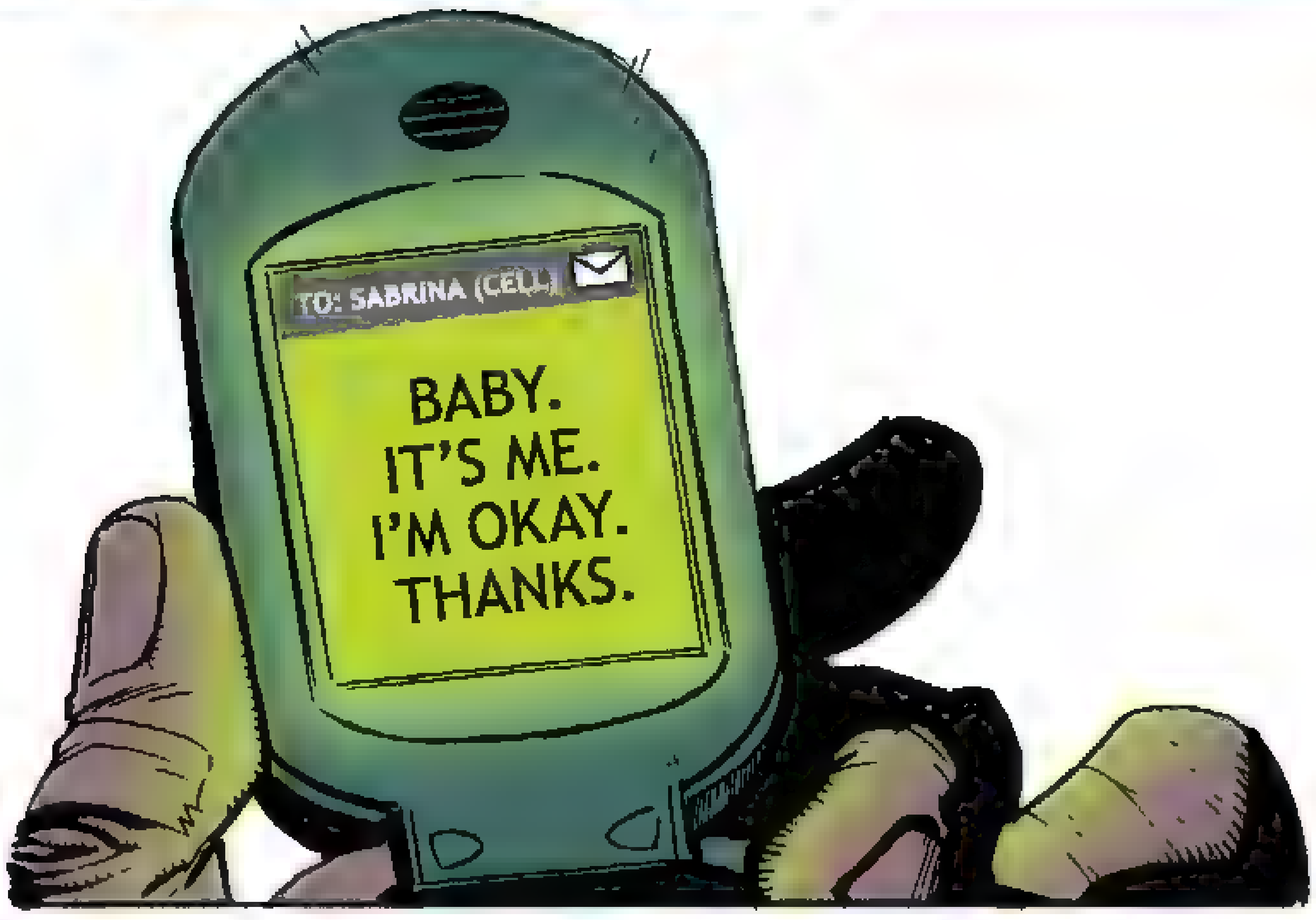

...KILL... YOU...WITH A FUCKING... HAMMER...
MO'LOCK, MIGHT I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU?
OF COURSE.
WHERE ARE WE GOING? I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE CAL ALONE.
THE WINDOW AT THE END OF THE HALL. YOU NEED TO SEE SOMETHING.
THEY HAVE COME FROM ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES.

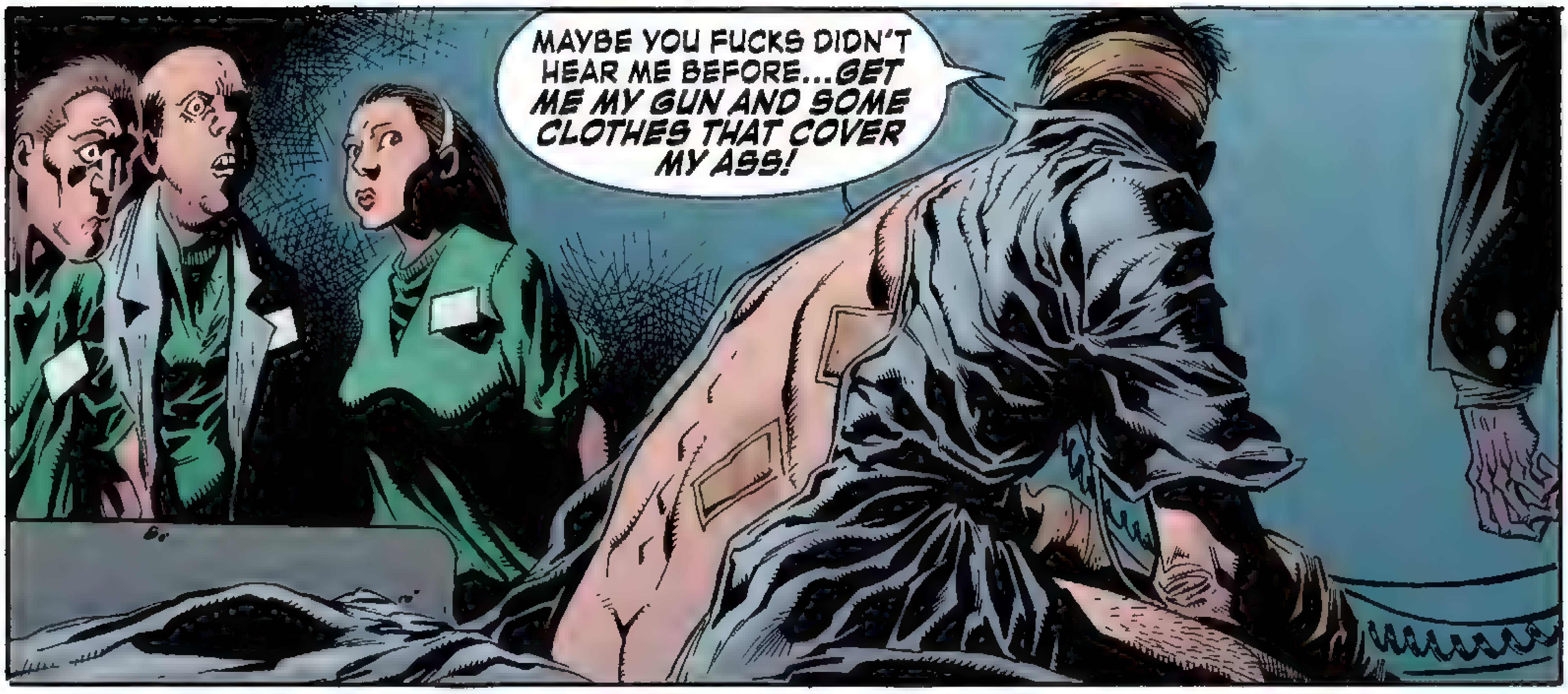
THEY ARE HERE TO HELP CAL MCDONALD.
WE DO NOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN HE CAME FOR CAL.
HE IS AN ANCIENT. HE CAME FOR SOMETHING.

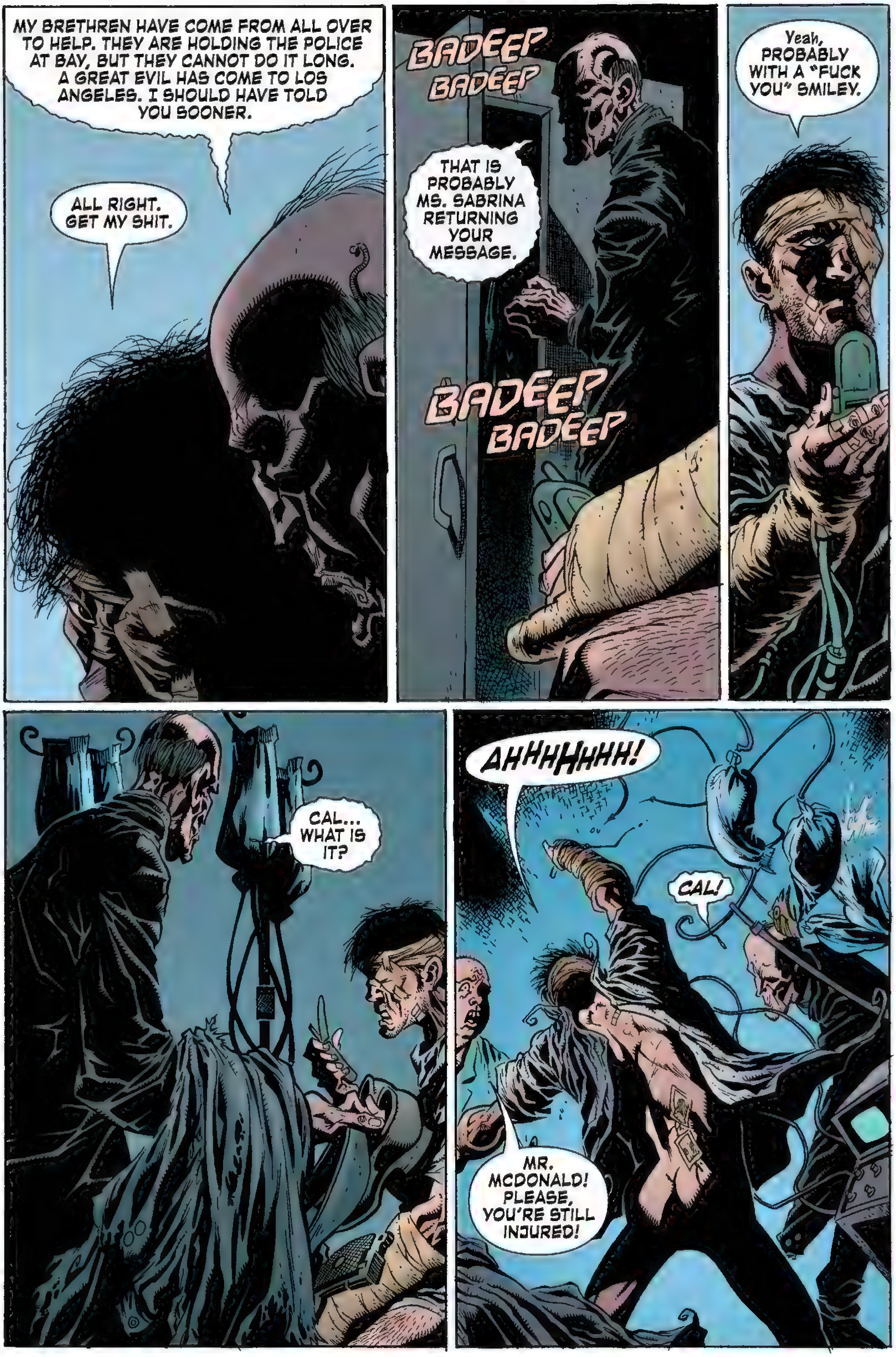
KRASH
CAL?!
WHAT THE FUCK?
WHERE. THE. FUCK. AM. I?
EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL, CAL.
WHY DO I FEEL SO WEIRD?
MR. MCDONALD, YOU WERE SERIOUSLY BEATEN. W-WHILE UNCONSCIOUS YOU WENT THROUGH *WITHDRAWAL.*
AW, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE...


GET THIS CRAP OUT OF ME!
THE POLICE ARE ON THEIR WAY. THEY WANT TO ASK YOU QUESTIONS ABOUT...THE *INCIDENT.*
I BET THEY DO... LIKE HOW'D I LIKE MY BEATING?
REEEOOOREEEOOO
CAN YOU GET *THEM* TO SLOW THE POLICE?
THEY CAN STOP THEM.
SLOW WILL DO.
REEEOOO
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU PEOPLE DO TO ME?!
YOU'RE *SOBER,* MR. MCDONALD.
GET ME MY GUN AND SOME CLOTHES THAT COVER MY ASS!


I THOUGHT SABRINA WAS HERE?
CAL... SABRINA HAD TO LEAVE. YOU COULD CALL--
SHE LEFT? I CAN'T TALK TO HER.
SHE WANTED YOU TO TEXT MESSAGE HER... SHE'D RATHER NOT SPEAK, I ASSUME.
TEXT MESSAGING IS FOR GIRLS.
AND GHOULS.
DON'T MAKE ME SHOOT YOU.


TO: SABRINA (CELL)
BABY. IT'S ME. I'M OKAY. THANKS.


MAYBE YOU FUCKS DIDN'T HEAR ME BEFORE...*GET ME MY GUN AND SOME CLOTHES THAT COVER MY ASS!*


MY BRETHREN HAVE COME FROM ALL OVER TO HELP. THEY ARE HOLDING THE POLICE AT BAY, BUT THEY CANNOT DO IT LONG. A GREAT EVIL HAS COME TO LOS ANGELES. I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU SOONER.
ALL RIGHT. GET MY SHIT.
BADEEP BADEEP
THAT IS PROBABLY MS. SABRINA RETURNING YOUR MESSAGE.
BADEEP BADEEP
Yeah, PROBABLY WITH A "FUCK YOU" SMILEY.
CAL... WHAT IS IT?
AHHHHHHH!
CAL!
MR. MCDONALD! PLEASE, YOU'RE STILL INJURED!

SKRUNK
FROM: SAMINA (CEL)
YOUR BABY IS WITH ME NOW.

I'VE BEEN SOBER NOW FOR ALL OF TEN MINUTES AND I HATE IT.
THE ONE THING NOBODY EVER SAYS ABOUT HAVING A CLEAR HEAD IS THAT YOU **FEEL EVERYTHING.**
SOMEBODY OR SOMETHING HAS SABRINA.
I'M FEELING, ALL RIGHT.
FEELING ANGRY.
FEELING PISSED.
FEELING LIKE **KILLING.**

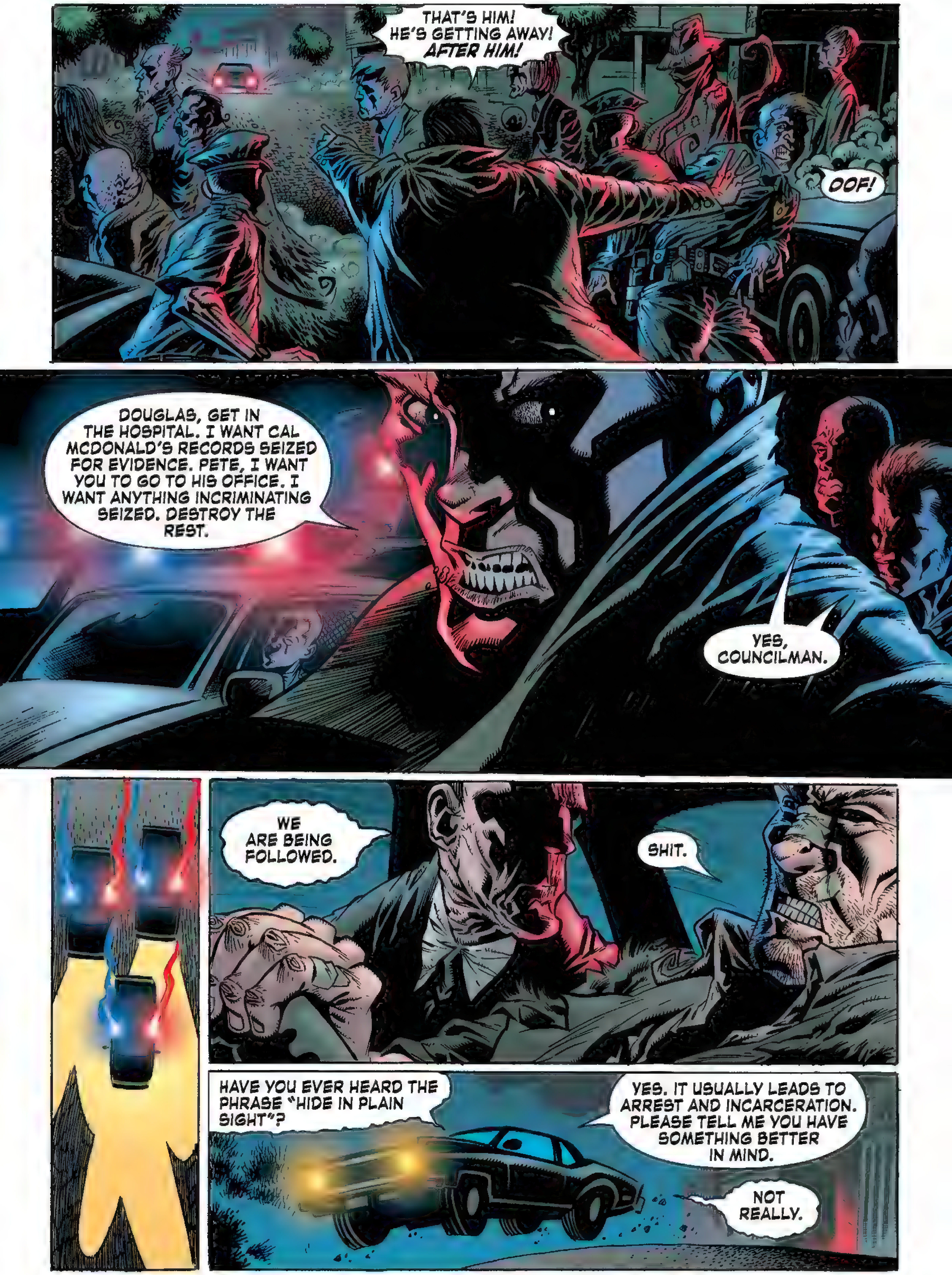
AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, BRUEGER'S PSYCHO COUNCILMAN HUSBAND* HAS MADE ME A TARGET OF THE **LAPD**.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THE WORLD WAS AGAINST ME. I KNEW THINGS WERE GETTING TOO COMFY.
NOW I WAS WHERE I WAS USED TO BEING--ON MY OWN, WITHOUT A FRIEND IN THE WORLD...ASIDE FROM THE CITY'S **UNDEAD** POPULATION.
IT ISN'T MUCH CONSOLATION, BUT THE GHOULS HAVE MY BACK.
*THE GOOD COUNCILMAN PUT CAL IN THE HOSPITAL IN ISSUE ONE.

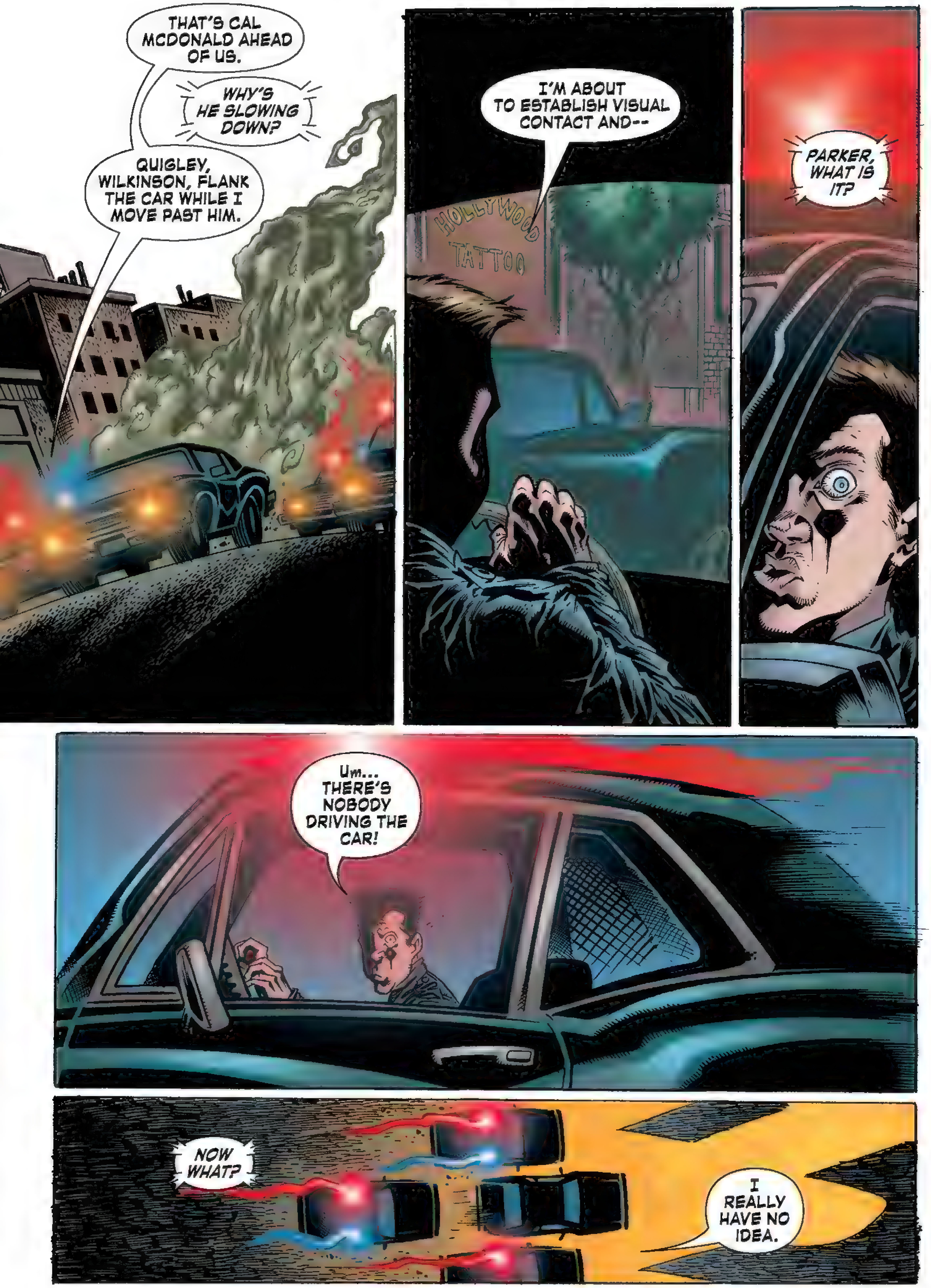
PERHAPS SHOOTING YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS ISN'T THE BEST OPTION, CAL.
GOT ANY BETTER IDEAS?
N'ELSON. WE'VE GOT TO GET CAL OUT OF THIS SITUATION. CAN WE CREATE A DIVERSION?
I BELIEVE A DISTRACTION WOULD NOT WORK AS WELL AS A BLOCKADE.
ALL RIGHT. DO IT. I'LL HANG BACK UNTIL THE COAST IS CLEAR.
I WILL SPREAD THE WORD.
I HOPE YOUR FREAK PALS KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.
SO DO I.
I SHOULDA STOLEN SOME PILLS WHILE I WAS IN THERE.
CAL!
I DIDN'T ASK FOR THIS CLEAR HEAD. IT MAKES ME THINK CRAZY THOUGHTS.

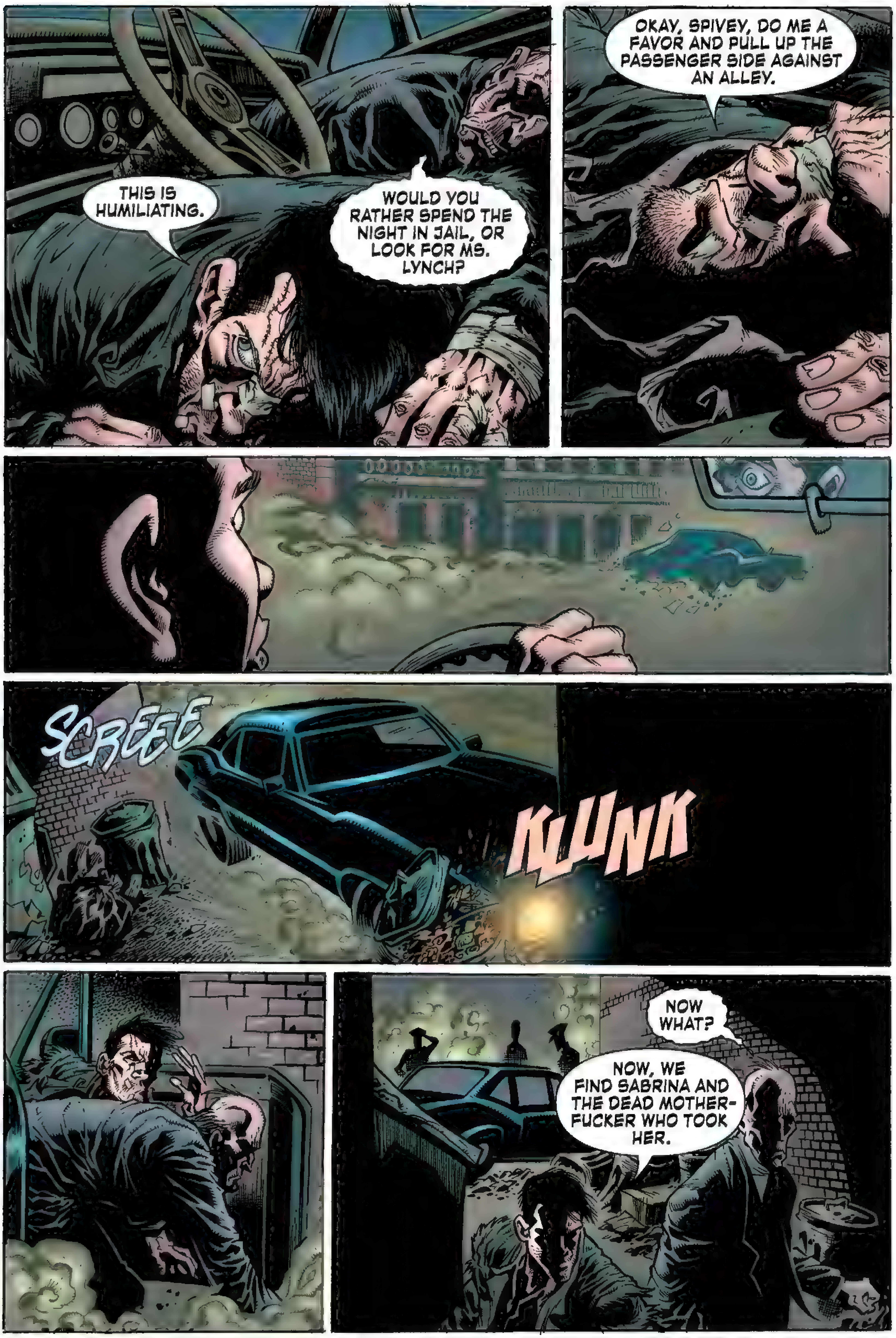
UNITS, REPORT YOUR POSITION.
UNIT 17 REPORTING. THE SITUATION APPEARS CLEAR. WE'RE TAKING UP AT THE HOSPITAL--
SHREEEEE
SHREEEEE
SHREEEEE
--ENTRANCE.
THIS IS COUNCILMAN BENSON. WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON IN THERE?!
WOULD YOU BELIEVE A PARADE?

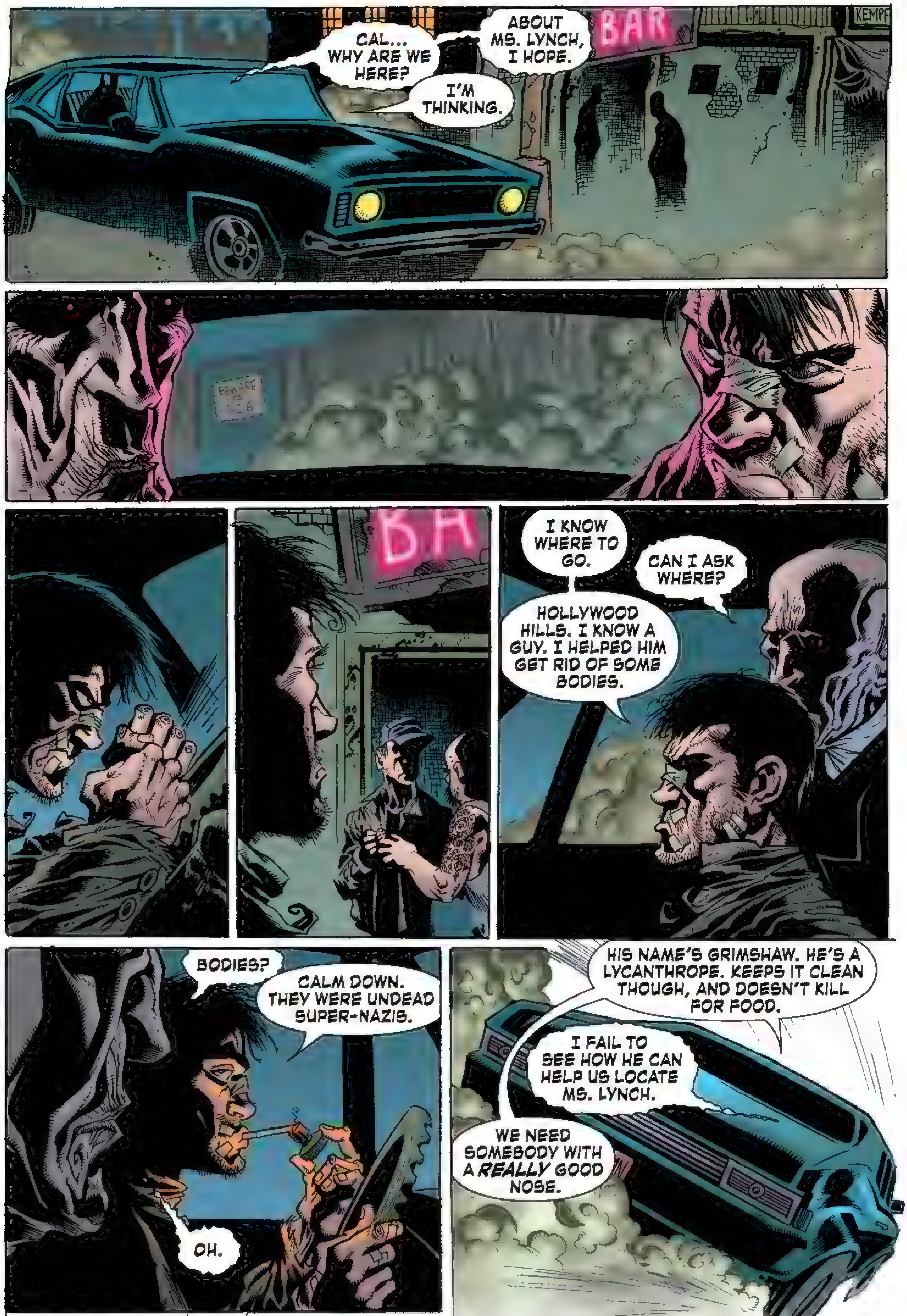
CLEAR THE WAY! GET OUT THE WAY!
THIS IS THE L.A.P.D.. YOU ARE INTERFERING WITH A POLICE ACTION. CLEAR THE AREA IMMEDIATELY.
WHAT'S THE GODDAMN HOLDUP?! I WANT THIS AREA CLEARED, DO YOU HEAR ME?!
THEY CAME OUT OF NOWHERE, SIR. HOMELESS, I THINK. MAYBE ONE OF THE SHELTERS CLOSED DOWN.

IF THEY WON'T CLEAR THE AREA IN TWO MINUTES I WANT YOU TO START ARRESTING THEM.
ON WHAT CHARGE, SIR?
LOITERING, OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE, I DON'T GIVE A FUCK. GET THEM OUT OF THE WAY BEFORE MCDONALD LEAVES THE HOSPITAL. I HAVE THAT FUCKER DEAD TO RIGHTS.
BUT SIR, IF WE WAIT WE CAN--
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, OFFICER?
P-PARKER.
I AM NOT HERE TO DEBATE YOU, OFFICER PARKER. I WILL HAVE YOU DEMOTED TO METER MAID IF YOU DON'T CLEAR THE WAY!
NOW WHAT? WHERE'S THE NOVA?
UNFORTUNATELY, THE CAR IS BACK AT THE HOUSE. WE WILL HAVE TO COMMANDEER ANOTHER.
CREEPY.
INDEED.
KLIK
MNSTRMN


THAT'S HIM! HE'S GETTING AWAY! *AFTER HIM!*
OOF!
DOUGLAS, GET IN THE HOSPITAL. I WANT CAL MCDONALD'S RECORDS SEIZED FOR EVIDENCE. PETE, I WANT YOU TO GO TO HIS OFFICE. I WANT ANYTHING INCRIMINATING SEIZED. DESTROY THE REST.
YES, COUNCILMAN.
WE ARE BEING FOLLOWED.
SHIT.
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE PHRASE "HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT"?
YES. IT USUALLY LEADS TO ARREST AND INCARCERATION. PLEASE TELL ME YOU HAVE SOMETHING BETTER IN MIND.
NOT REALLY.


THAT'S CAL MCDONALD AHEAD OF US.
WHY'S HE SLOWING DOWN?
QUIGLEY, WILKINSON, FLANK THE CAR WHILE I MOVE PAST HIM.
I'M ABOUT TO ESTABLISH VISUAL CONTACT AND--
HOLLYWOOD TATTOO
PARKER, WHAT IS IT?
Um... THERE'S NOBODY DRIVING THE CAR!
NOW WHAT?
I REALLY HAVE NO IDEA.


THIS IS HUMILIATING.
WOULD YOU RATHER SPEND THE NIGHT IN JAIL, OR LOOK FOR MS. LYNCH?
OKAY, SPIVEY, DO ME A FAVOR AND PULL UP THE PASSENGER SIDE AGAINST AN ALLEY.
SCREEE
KLUNK
NOW WHAT?
NOW, WE FIND SABRINA AND THE DEAD MOTHER-FUCKER WHO TOOK HER.


KEMPF
BAR
CAL... WHY ARE WE HERE?
ABOUT MS. LYNCH, I HOPE.
I'M THINKING.
BEWARE OF DOG
BA
I KNOW WHERE TO GO.
CAN I ASK WHERE?
HOLLYWOOD HILLS. I KNOW A GUY. I HELPED HIM GET RID OF SOME BODIES.
BODIES?
CALM DOWN. THEY WERE UNDEAD SUPER-NAZIS.
OH.
HIS NAME'S GRIMSHAW. HE'S A LYCANTHROPE. KEEPS IT CLEAN THOUGH, AND DOESN'T KILL FOR FOOD.
I FAIL TO SEE HOW HE CAN HELP US LOCATE MS. LYNCH.
WE NEED SOMEBODY WITH A *REALLY* GOOD NOSE.

WHO WAS I KIDDING? I COULD HARDLY THINK. I HATED MYSELF FOR THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING TO NUMB ME. SOMETHING TO BLUR MY MIND.
I CAN'T EVEN DESCRIBE THE FEELING IN MY GUT. IT WAS LIKE A GLASS-SPIKED STONE HAD BEEN LAID TO REST IN MY BELLY.
IT WASN'T SOME LAME-ASS DRUG-CRAVING PAIN EITHER. THOSE WERE ALL IN MY HEAD.
IT WAS KNOWING THAT EVERY SECOND THAT WENT BY MADE IT LESS LIKELY WE'D FIND SABRINA ALIVE.
IF AT ALL.
ON THE WAY TO GRIMSHAW'S PLACE IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS, MO'LOCK SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT SABRINA TO THE GHOULS.
AND BROTHER, PLEASE REMEMBER THE FREIGHT SHIP THAT CRASHED INTO SANTA MONICA PIER. ITS OCCUPANT WAS MOST SUSPICIOUS.
WHAT FREIGHTER?
I HAVE TO GO. SPREAD THE WORD, BROTHER.
A SHIP CRASHED INTO THE SANTA MONICA PIER, KILLING ONE POLICE OFFICER AND DESTROYING MOST OF THE ATTRACTIONS, AS WELL AS THE PIER ITSELF.
WHY DIDN'T I HEAR ABOUT THAT?
YOU WERE IN A COMA.
IS WHAT HAPPENED WORTH MENTIONING TO YOUR FREAK-ASS FRIENDS?
THEY ARE YOUR FRIENDS TOO, CAL. THEY CARE ABOUT YOU.
SHUT UP.
UPON LATER EXAMINATION OF THE SHIP IT WAS DISCOVERED IT WAS A ROMANIAN COMMERCIAL FREIGHTER--
ROMANIA? NOTHING GOOD EVER CAME FROM THERE.
THE *INNOCENT* CREW WAS FOUND MUTILATED, SKINNED ALMOST TO THE BONE, AND STUFFED INTO LIVING QUARTERS. WHEN THE SHIP WAS FIRST OPENED, AND I WAS PRESENT FOR THIS, THE ONLY PASSENGERS WERE MILLIONS OF VERMIN AND INSECTS.
I SAW THE RATS FORM INTO WHAT APPEARED TO BE AN ANCIENT UNDEAD...FROM THE OLD COUNTRY. IF I VENTURED TO GUESS I'D SAY HE WAS ONE OF THE ORIGINALS.
OLD-WORLD VAMPIRE. FUCKIN' GREAT.

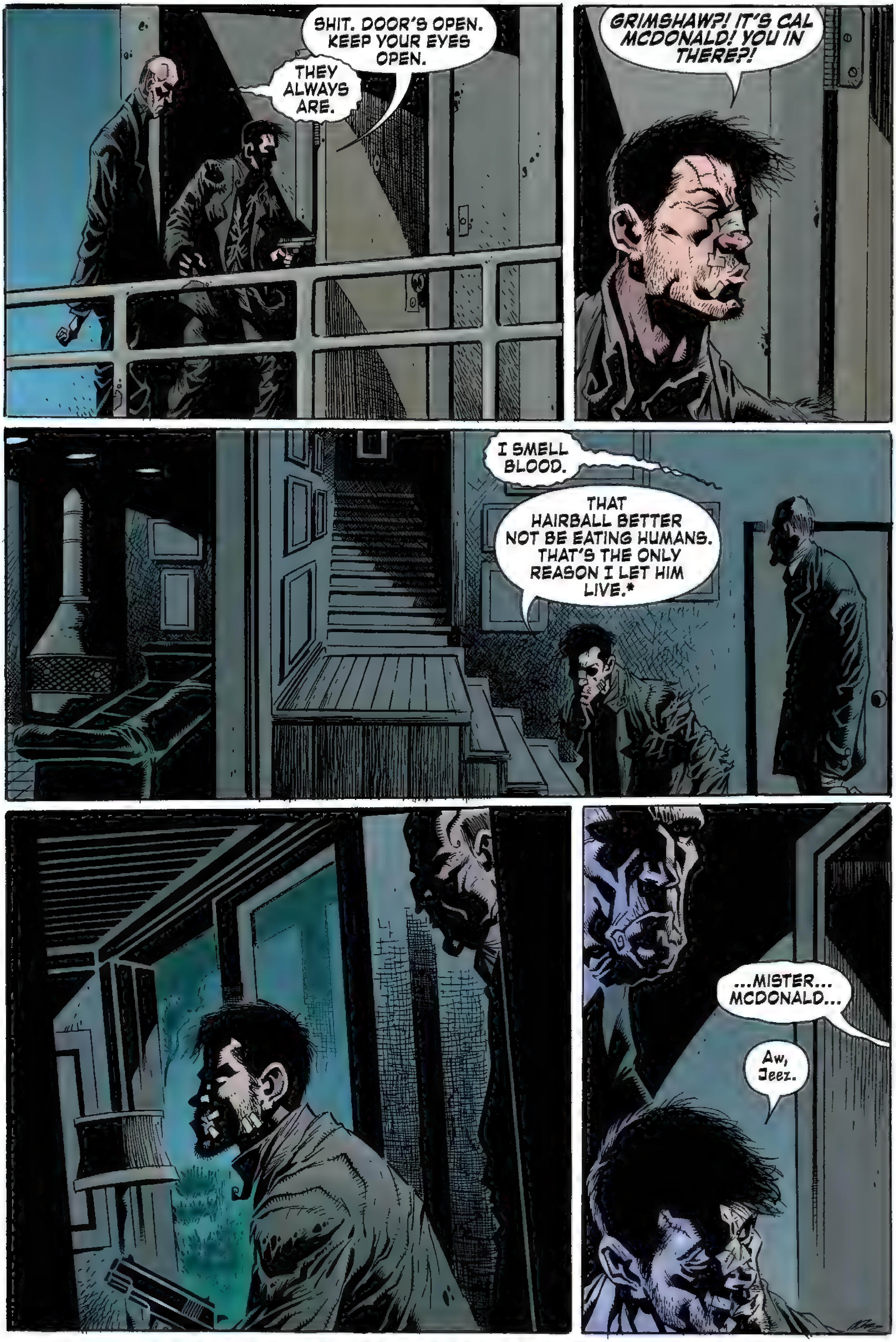
Mmmm...
...Mmmm... Huh?
GAH!

AAAAAAH!

AWWW, GOD!
NOOOO!
Huh?

WOOD

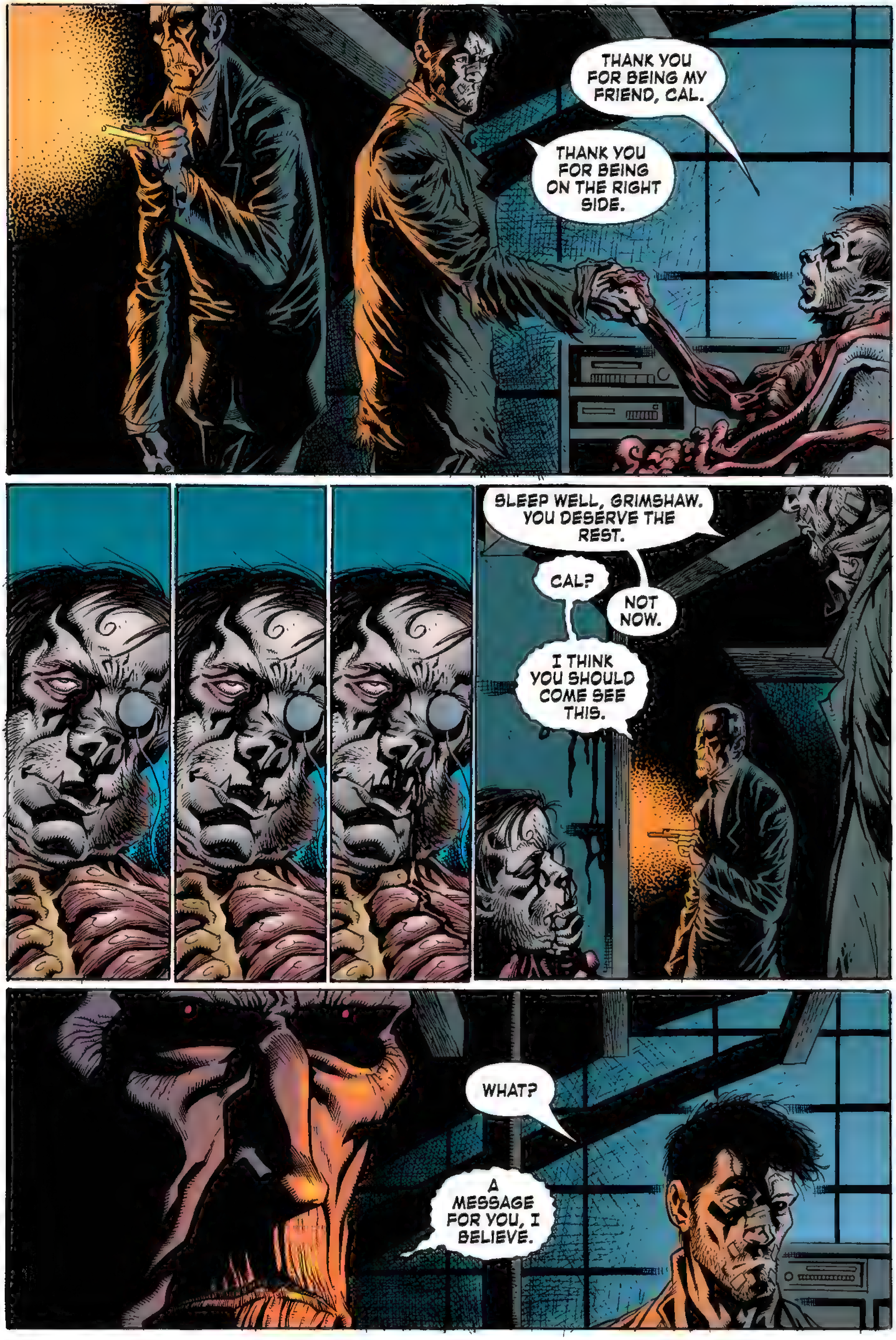
MS. SABRINA LYNCH.
WHO--?
DIDN'T ANYONE EVER TELL YOU THAT *OUR* GREATEST POWER IS THAT NO ONE WILL ADMIT WE EXIST?
YOUR PUBLICATION IS ONE OF *TWO* PROBLEMS I HAVE TRAVELED ACROSS THE WORLD TO ELIMINATE.
BUT I HARDLY EXPECTED ONE OF MY PROBLEMS TO BE SO...DELICIOUSLY ENTICING.


SHIT. DOOR'S OPEN. KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN.
THEY ALWAYS ARE.
GRIMSHAW?! IT'S CAL MCDONALD! YOU IN THERE?!
I SMELL BLOOD.
THAT HAIRBALL BETTER NOT BE EATING HUMANS. THAT'S THE ONLY REASON I LET HIM LIVE.*
...MISTER... MCDONALD...
Aw, Jeez.

*SEE *DIAL M FOR MONSTER: A PROPER MONSTER* FOR MORE ON GRIMSHAW THE WEREWOLF.

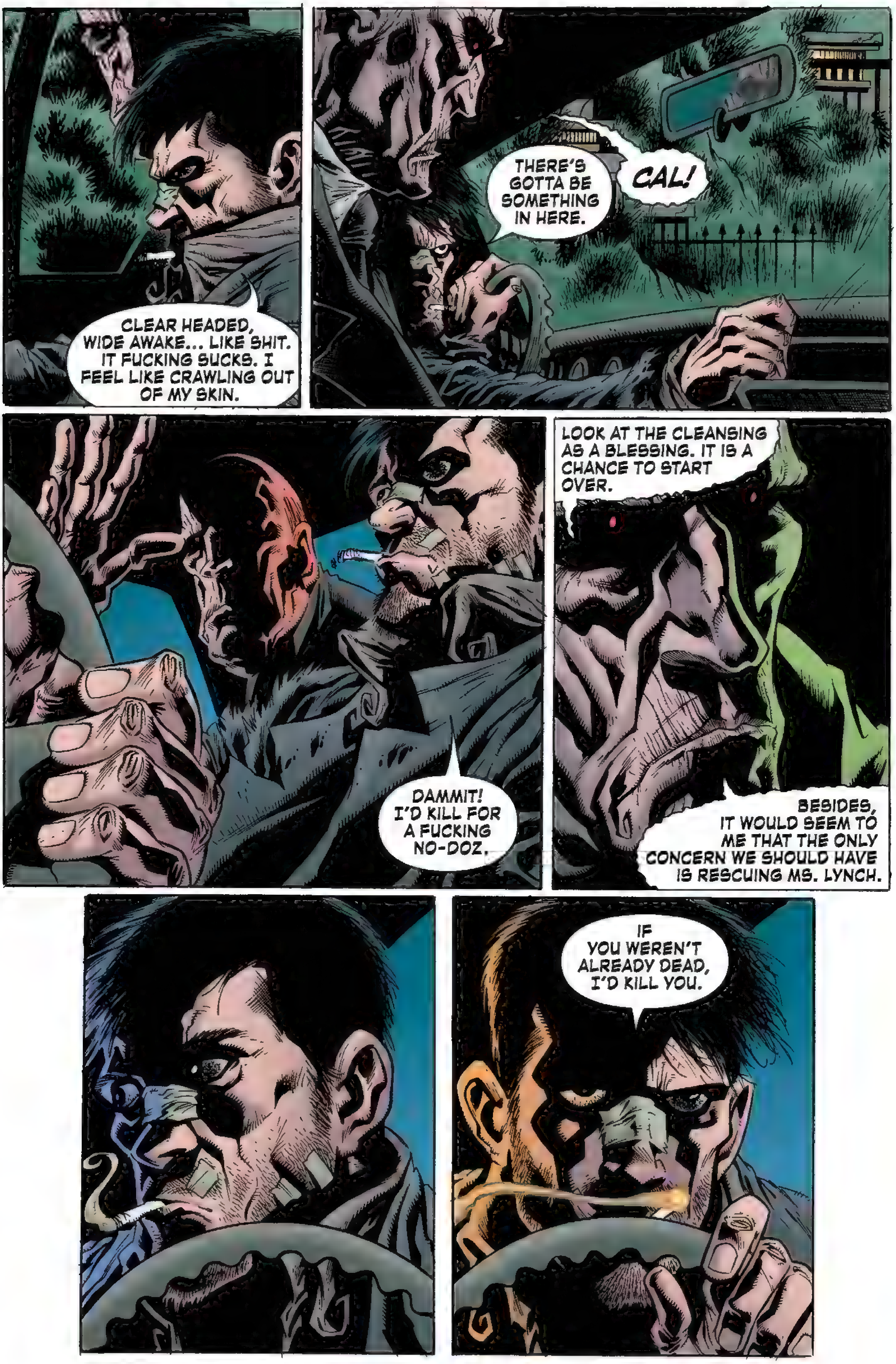
WOOD
I'D HOPED FOR SLIGHTLY...BETTER... CIRCUMSTANCES THE NEXT TIME WE MET, MISTER M... MCDONALD.
IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?
I DON'T THINK SO, BUT THANK YOU FOR OFFERING. I THINK THIS TIME I WILL NOT ESCAPE DEATH...AND TRUTHFULLY, CAL, IF I MAY CALL YOU THAT, SIR, I AM TIRED.
I HAD A GOOD LIFE. HELL, I HAD A GOOD DEATH. NOW MAYBE IT IS TIME FOR A FINAL SLEEP.
THANK YOU.
WHO DID THIS, GRIMSHAW? ANYBODY YOU KNOW?
ONLY BY REPUTATION. HE DOES NOT HAVE A NAME AND AS FAR AS--
KAKK
--I KNOW HE HAS ALWAYS REMAINED IN ROMANIA EXCEPT FOR A BRIEF EXCURSION TO LONDON IN THE EARLY 1900S.
I... I'M AFRAID... I WAS NO MATCH FOR HIM. I WAS FULLY TRANSFORMED, BUT HE GUTTED ME WITH HIS BARE HANDS.

HE'S GOTTA HAVE SOME SORT OF NAME. PLEASE, GRIMSHAW, HE HAS MY GIRL.
IF HE HAS HER...
I KNOW HER ODDS, BUT I NEED TO FIND THIS FUCKER. SHE'S IN DANGER BECAUSE OF ME.
YOU HAVE THE WORLD ON YOUR... SH... SHOULDERS AND--
KRGK
--YOU STILL HAVE TO TAKE ON THE MOON AND SUN TOO. YOU ARE A RARE BREED, CAL. IT WAS GOOD TO HAVE KNOWN YOU.
WHAT DO THEY CALL HIM?
NOBODY KNOWS WHO HE WAS IN LIFE, BUT IN UNDEATH, HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN CALLED...
...NOSFERATU, THE ORIGINAL UNDEAD.

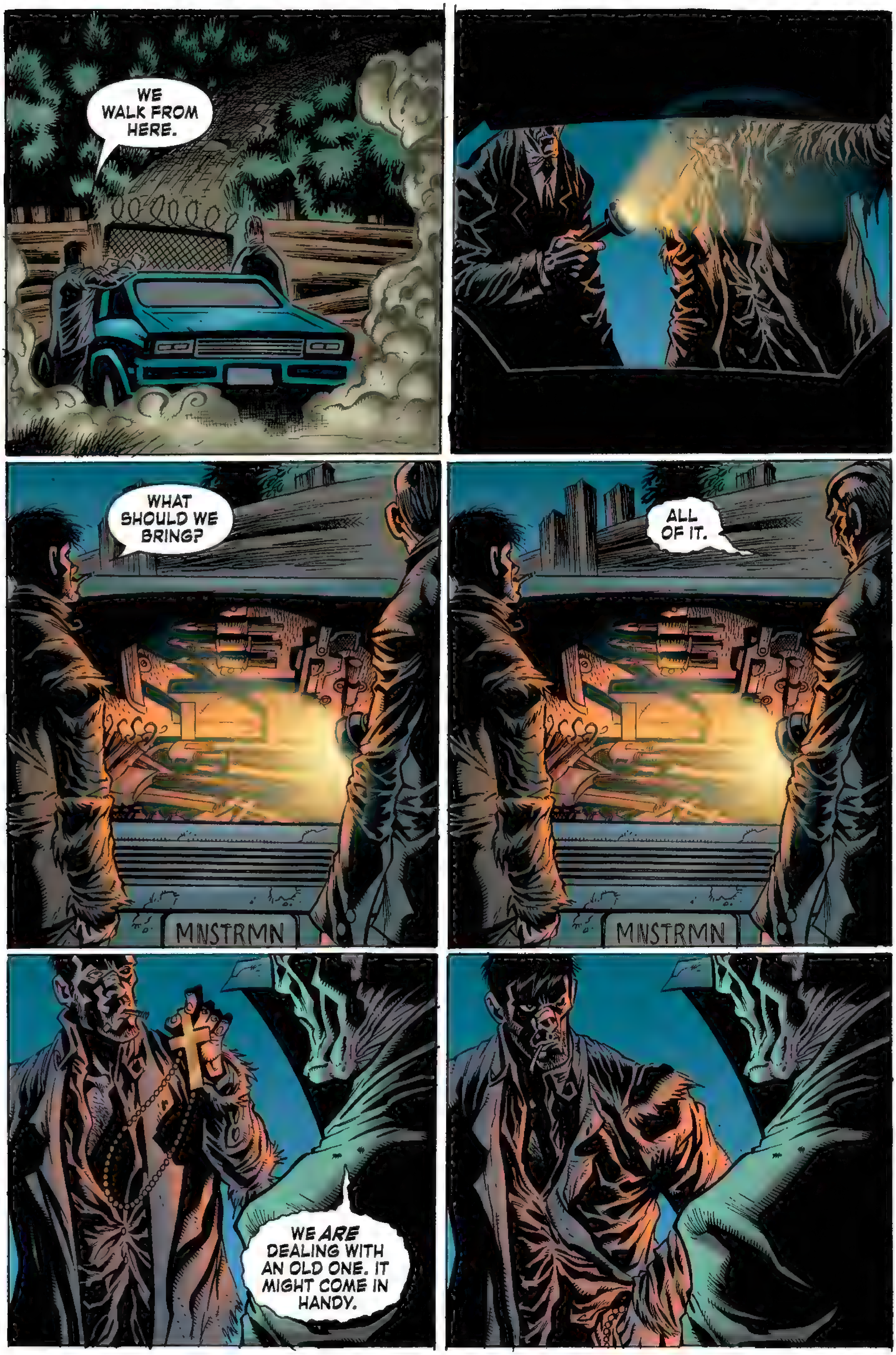

THANK YOU FOR BEING MY FRIEND, CAL.
THANK YOU FOR BEING ON THE RIGHT SIDE.
SLEEP WELL, GRIMSHAW. YOU DESERVE THE REST.
CAL?
NOT NOW.
I THINK YOU SHOULD COME SEE THIS.
WHAT?
A MESSAGE FOR YOU, I BELIEVE.

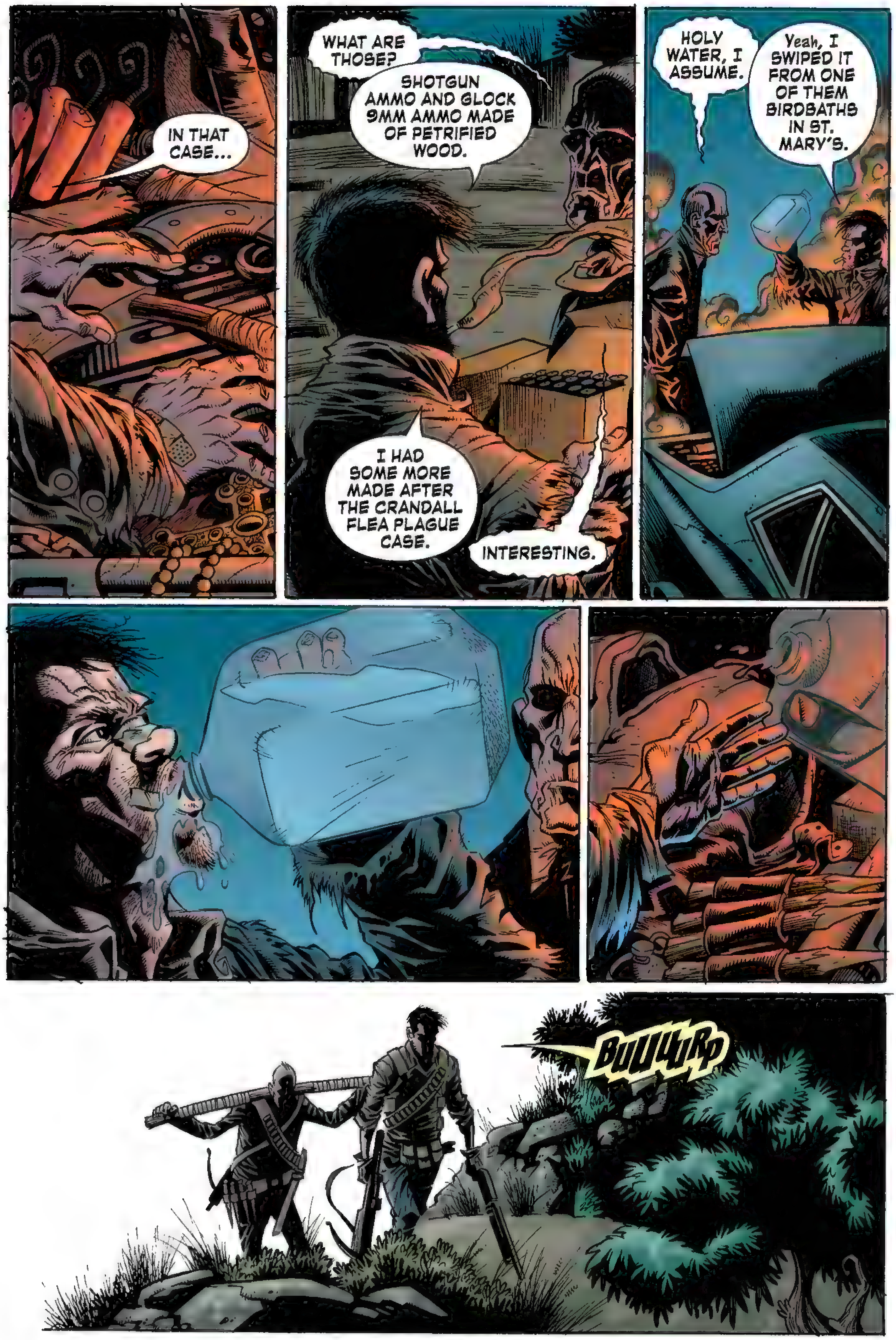
HOLLYWOOD
RIDDLES. I FUCKING HATE RIDDLES.
ONE STEP AHEAD OF YOU
Sometimes Girls Jump Before they are pushed

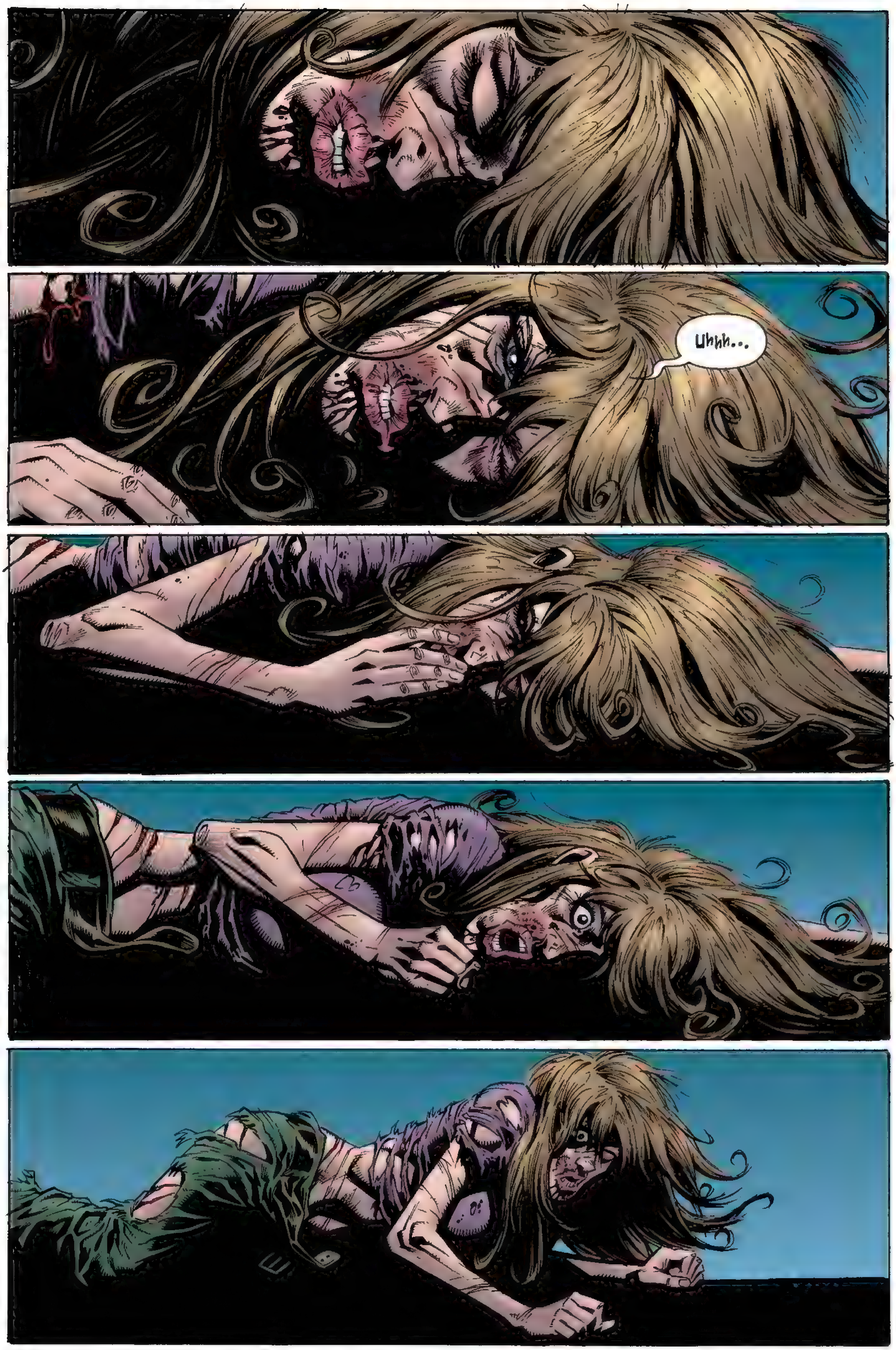
AS CLUES WENT, IT WAS OBVIOUS AND FAIRLY LAME.
BUT WHAT DID YOU EXPECT FROM A 500-YEAR-OLD EURO-VAMP?
"SOMETIMES GIRLS JUMP BEFORE THEY ARE PUSHED."
LOS ANGELES HAS A COUPLE FAMOUS LANDMARKS, BUT ONLY ONE KNOWN FOR FAILED ACTRESSES FALLING TO THEIR DEATHS.
HOLLYWOOD
THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN.
THE FUCKER HAD SABRINA AT THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN.
HOW DO YOU FEEL, CAL?


CLEAR HEADED, WIDE AWAKE... LIKE SHIT. IT FUCKING SUCKS. I FEEL LIKE CRAWLING OUT OF MY SKIN.
THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING IN HERE.
CAL!
DAMMIT! I'D KILL FOR A FUCKING NO-DOZ.
LOOK AT THE CLEANSING AS A BLESSING. IT IS A CHANCE TO START OVER.
BESIDES, IT WOULD SEEM TO ME THAT THE ONLY CONCERN WE SHOULD HAVE IS RESCUING MS. LYNCH.
IF YOU WEREN'T ALREADY DEAD, I'D KILL YOU.

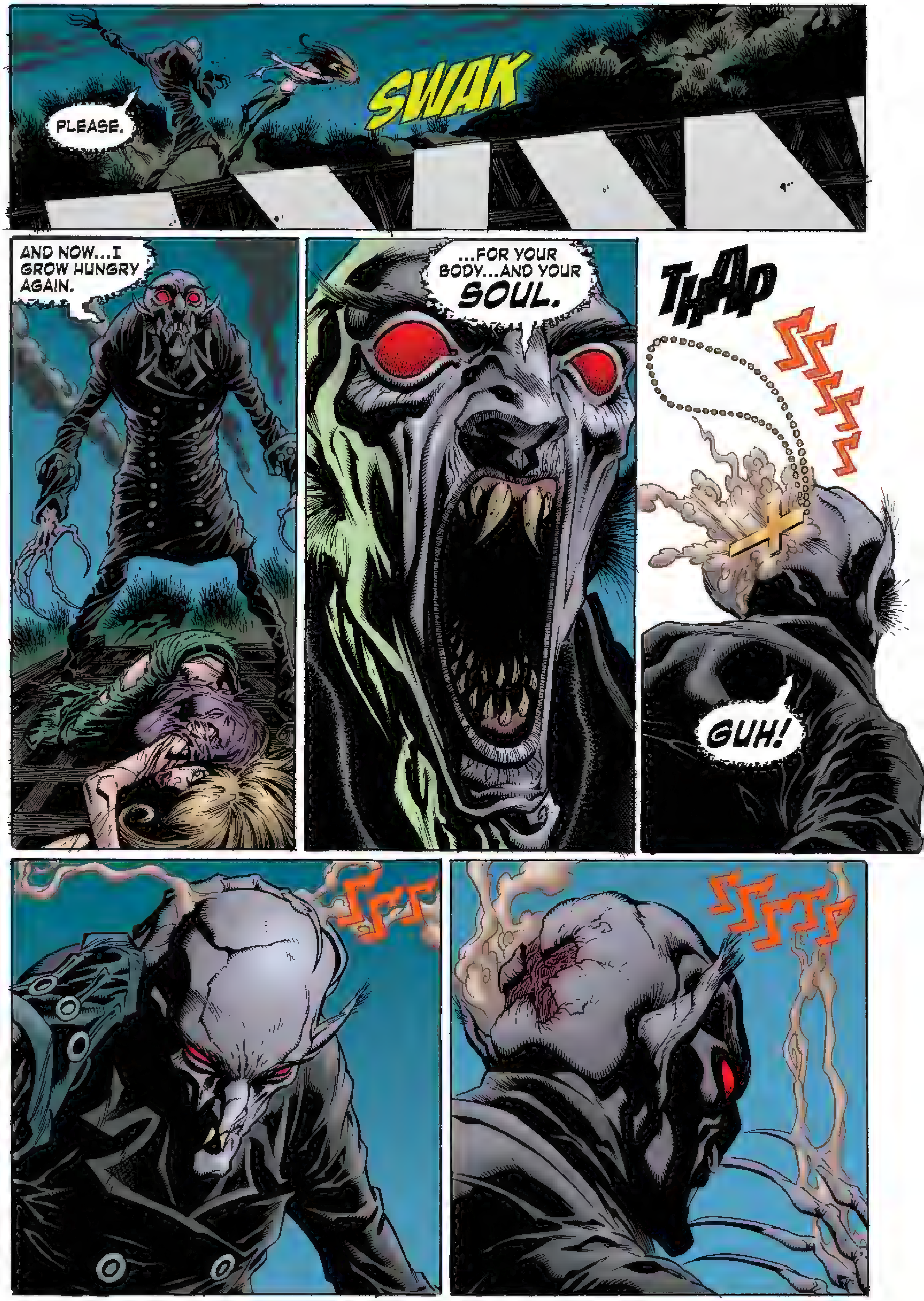
WHY DON'T YOU CALL IN SOME OF YOUR PALS FOR BACKUP? IF THIS NOSFERATU IS AS TOUGH AS GRIMSHAW SAYS, IT SOUNDS LIKE WE'LL NEED IT.
I ALREADY TRIED.
GOOD, SO THEY'LL BE...WHAT DO YOU MEAN, *TRIED?*
MY FELLOW GHOULS...THEY ARE FRIGHTENED OF THIS CREATURE, CAL. THEY ARE TOO AFRAID TO CONFRONT HIM.
UNBE-*FUCKING*-LIEVABLE.
I AM HERE, CAL. I WILL BACK YOU UP.
YEAH, WELL, THANKS. I TAKE BACK THAT WHOLE KILLING-YOU THING.


WE WALK FROM HERE.
WHAT SHOULD WE BRING?
MNSTRMN
ALL OF IT.
MNSTRMN
WE ARE DEALING WITH AN OLD ONE. IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY.

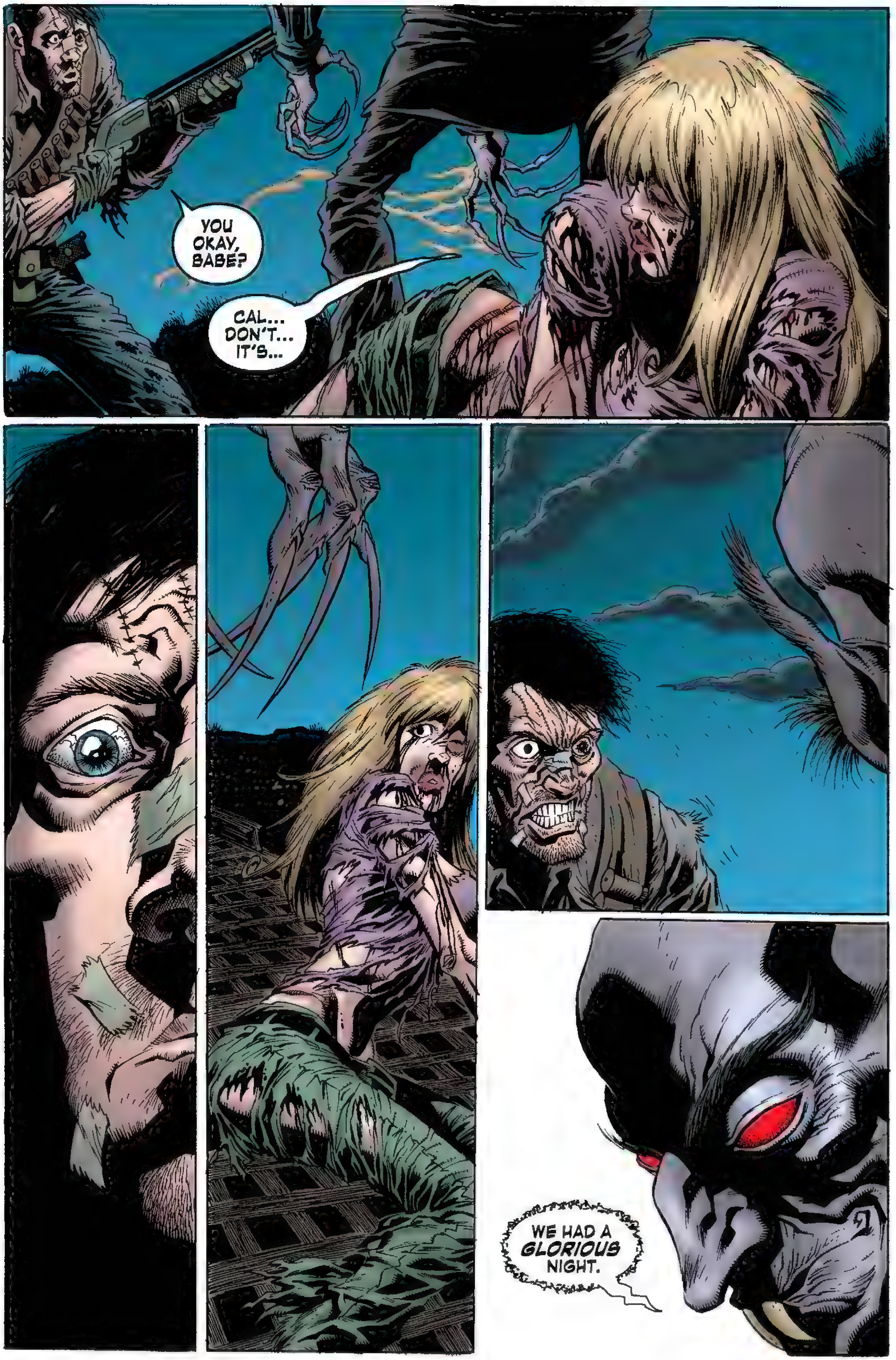

IN THAT CASE...
WHAT ARE THOSE?
SHOTGUN AMMO AND GLOCK 9MM AMMO MADE OF PETRIFIED WOOD.
I HAD SOME MORE MADE AFTER THE CRANDALL FLEA PLAGUE CASE.
INTERESTING.
HOLY WATER, I ASSUME.
Yeah, I SWIPED IT FROM ONE OF THEM BIRDBATHS IN ST. MARY'S.
BUUUURP

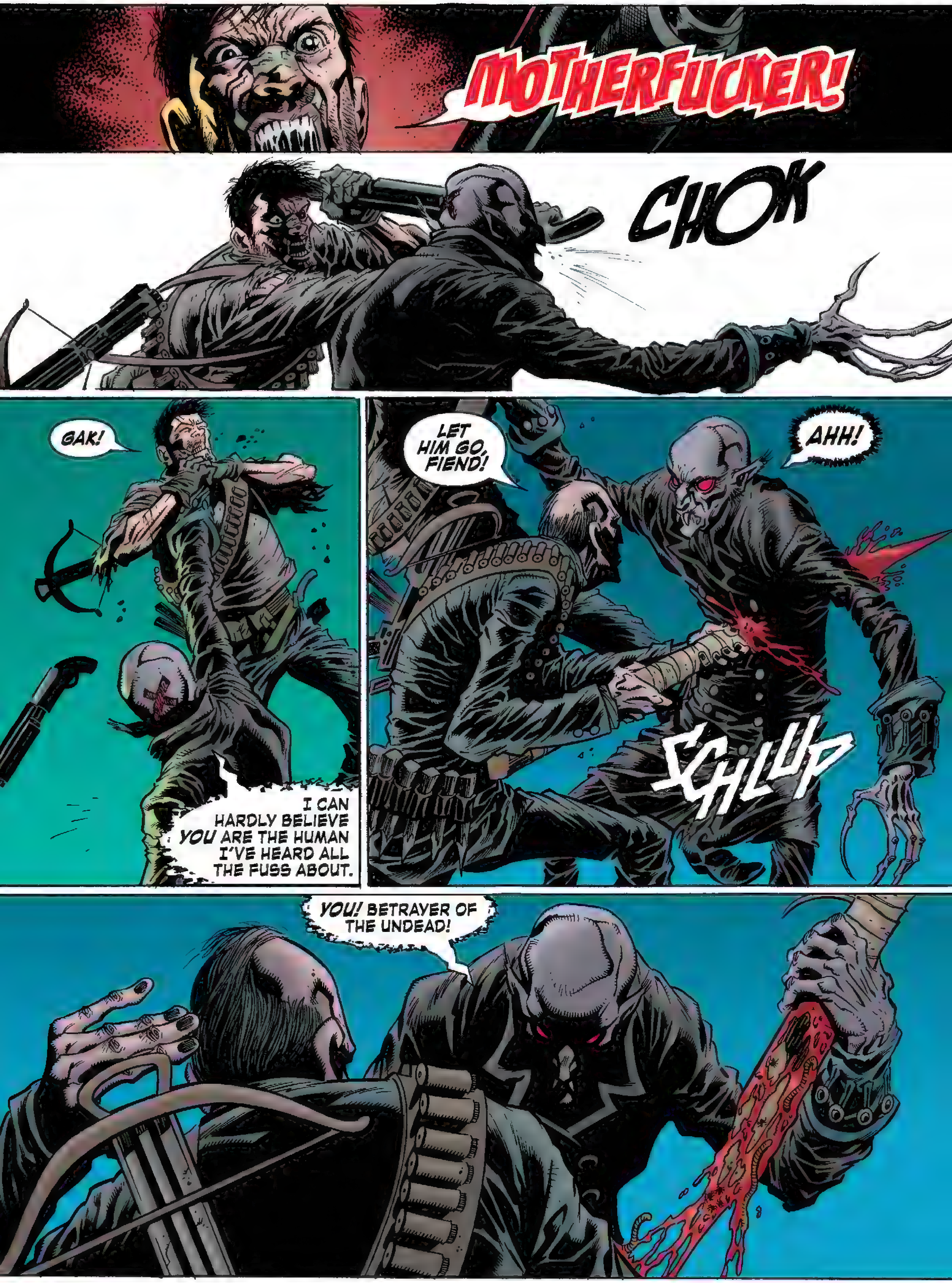

Uhhh...

NO.
Ah. GOOD. YOU'RE AWAKE.
I HOPE YOU ENJOYED OUR EVENING TOGETHER AS MUCH AS I DID.
YOU SON OF A BITCH! YOU FUCKING SON OF A BITCH!


PLEASE.
SWAK
AND NOW...I GROW HUNGRY AGAIN.
...FOR YOUR BODY...AND YOUR SOUL.
THAP
SSSSS
GUH!
SSS
SSSS

YOU LOOKING FOR TROUBLE, BALDY? YOU CAME TO THE RIGHT GUY.
KA-KLIK

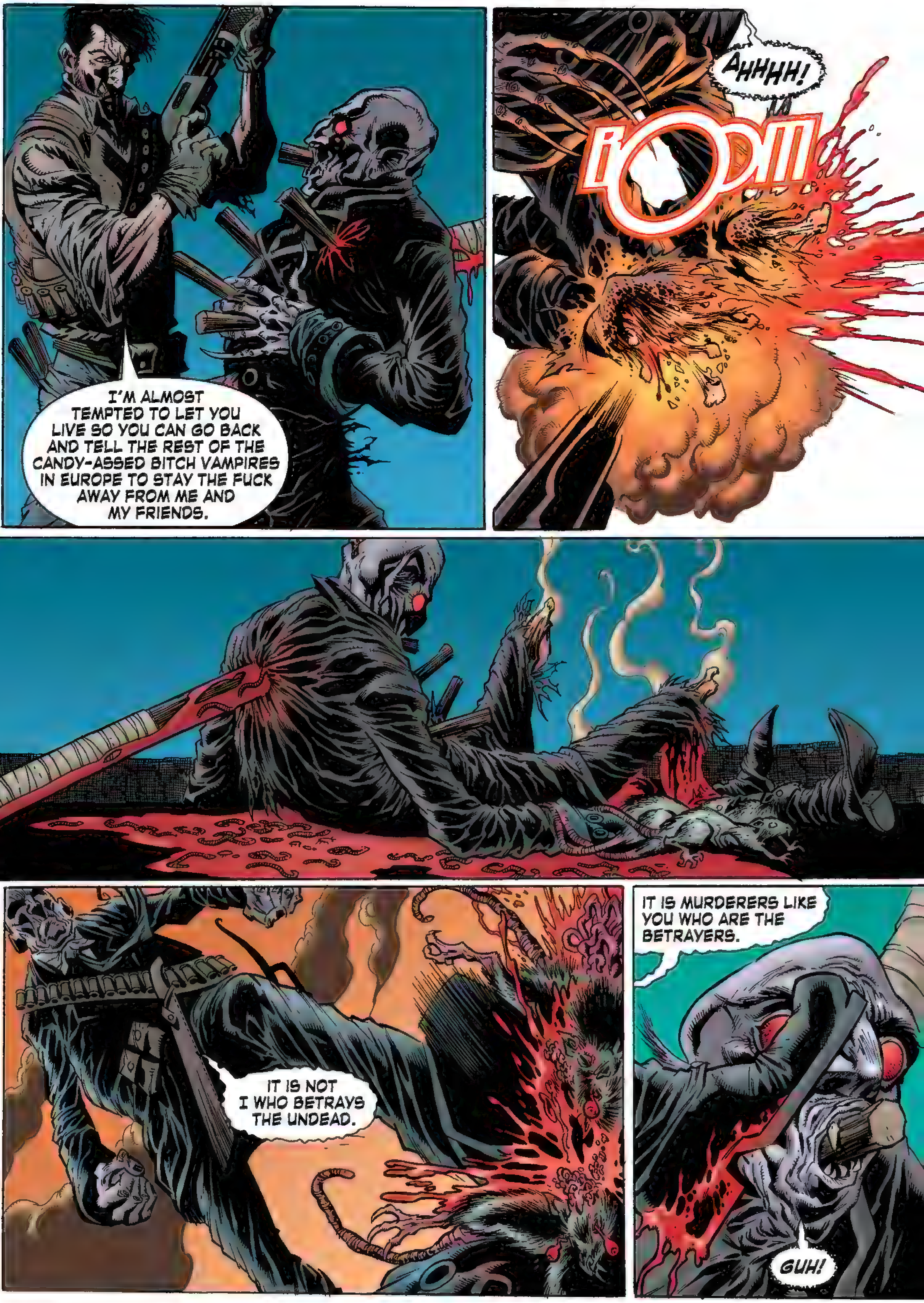

YOU OKAY, BABE?
CAL... DON'T... IT'S...
WE HAD A GLORIOUS NIGHT.


MOTHERFUCKER!
CHOK
GAK!
I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE *YOU* ARE THE HUMAN I'VE HEARD ALL THE FUSS ABOUT.
LET HIM GO, FIEND!
AHH!
SCHLUP
YOU! BETRAYER OF THE UNDEAD!

I WILL DEAL WITH YOU *FIRST!*
AND I KNOW HOW TO DISPATCH THE UNDEAD!
SKKGG
KKGG

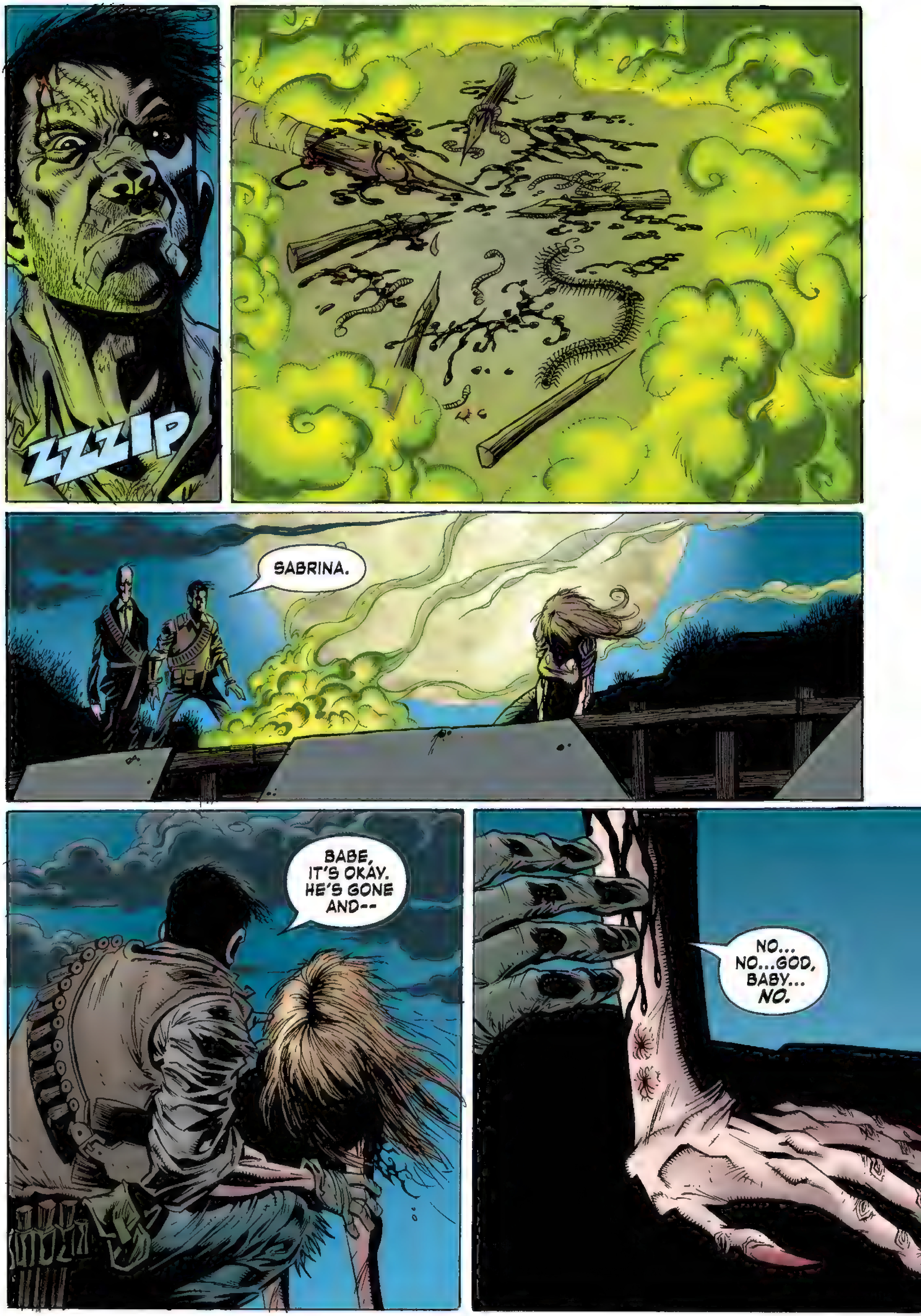
HAVE SOME WOOD.
ARRGH!
YOU!
YOU DIE.
AH!
NOW!
LEAVE HIM ALONE!

NOOOOOO!
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
YOU CANNOT... KILL ME... NOT YOU...
WHY DON'T YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP AND SKIP THE SPEECH.
ARRRGH!
THAT'S MORE LIKE IT.
NOOOOOOOO!

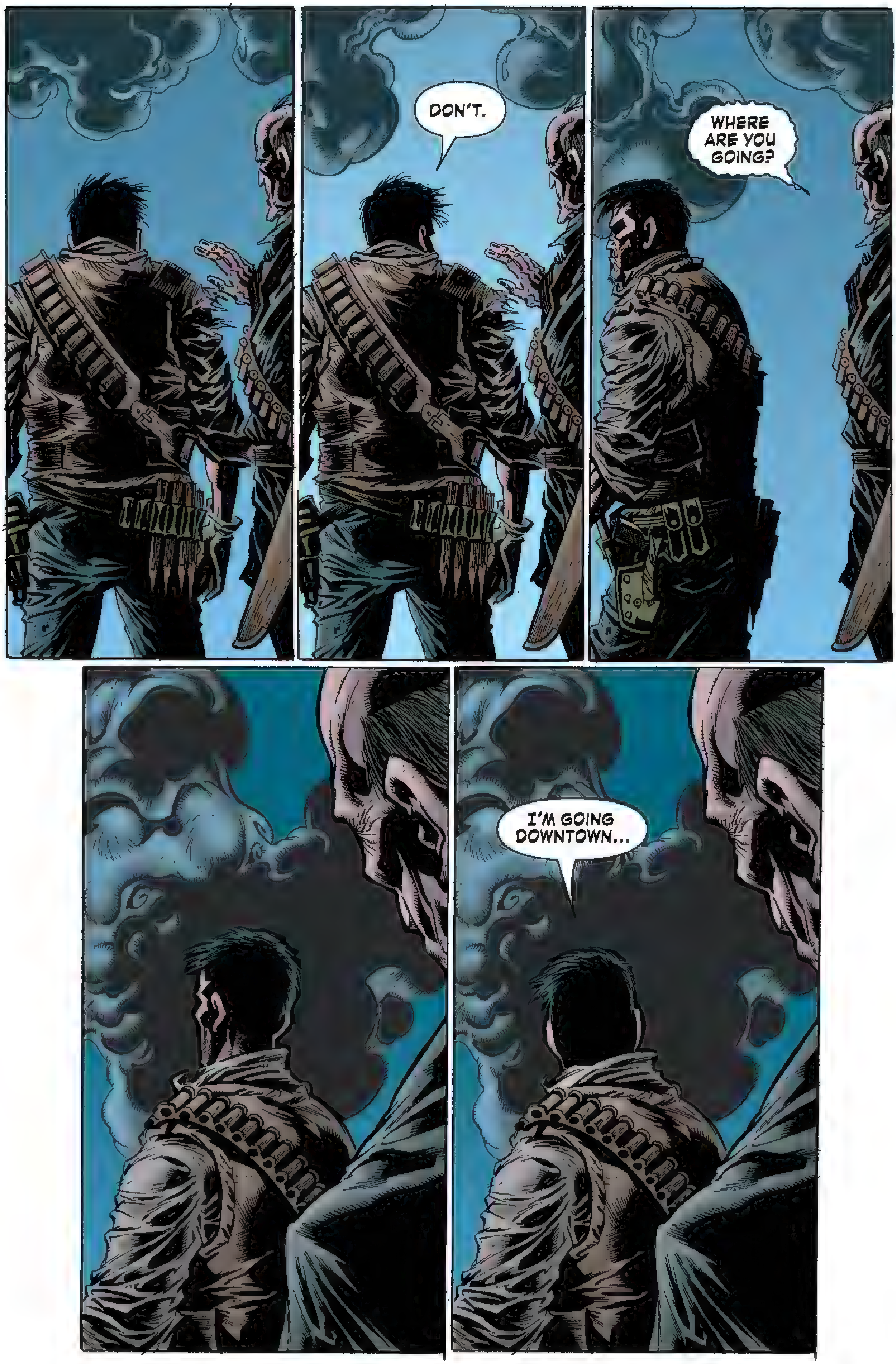

I'M ALMOST TEMPTED TO LET YOU LIVE SO YOU CAN GO BACK AND TELL THE REST OF THE CANDY-ASSED BITCH VAMPIRES IN EUROPE TO STAY THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME AND MY FRIENDS.
AHHHH!
BOOM
IT IS NOT I WHO BETRAYS THE UNDEAD.
IT IS MURDERERS LIKE YOU WHO ARE THE BETRAYERS.
GUH!

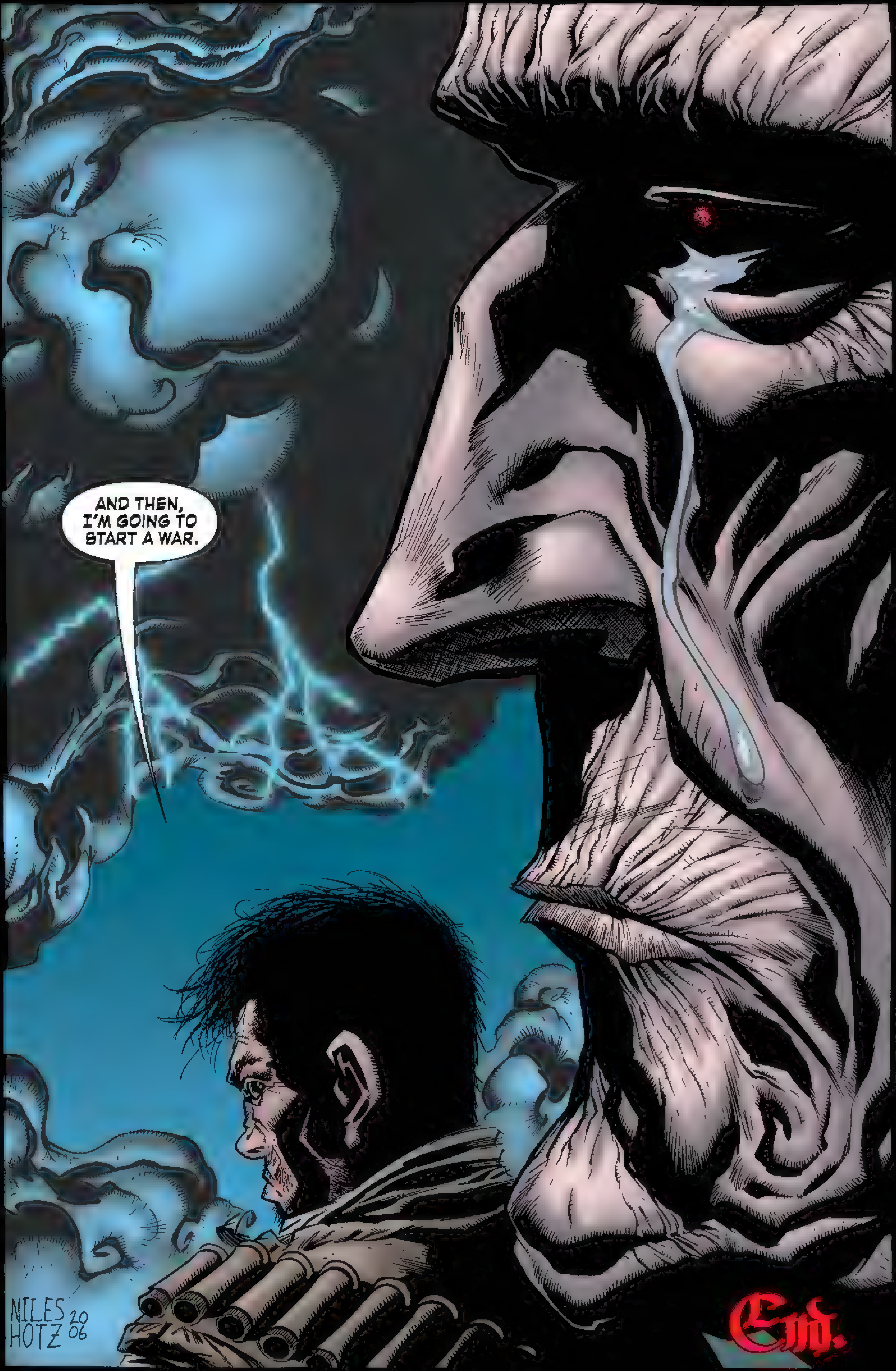
THANKS... BUT THIS DICK IS *MINE.*
BOOM!!
NOOOO!
BOOM!!
AAAH!
I AM IMMORTAL... I AM A *LEGEND.*
Yeah? LEGEND, Huh?
ZZZIP

WELL NOW YOU'RE MY *TOILET.*
PHSSSSS


ZZZIP
SABRINA.
BABE, IT'S OKAY. HE'S GONE AND--
NO... NO...GOD, BABY... *NO.*

GET AWAY!
SABRINA, BABY...I'M SORRY.
...SABRINA...


DON'T.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I'M GOING DOWNTOWN...


AND THEN, I'M GOING TO START A WAR.
NILES HOTZ 2006
End.

THE TROUBLE WITH BRAINS

story
STEVE NILES

art
KYLE HOTZ

colors
MICHELLE MADSEN

letters
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®

BOOM
WATCH IT, GRAMPY!
I'VE HAD PROBLEMS WITH BRAINS BEFORE.
AND NOT JUST THE ONE I HAVE ROTTING IN MY SKULL, BUT OTHER PEOPLE'S BRAINS.
BACK IN THE LATE '80'S, OR MAYBE IT WAS THE EARLY '90'S, I TANGLED WITH A HEAD THE SIZE OF A CHEVY NAMED EDGAR CAIN.
IS EVERYTHING OKAY?
YOU WERE RIGHT, LADY. HE WAS A ZOMBIE.
OH DEAR.
YOU WANNA PAY NOW OR MAIL ME A CHECK?
IT'S ALWAYS A SHOCK WHEN A LOVED ONE TRIES TO EAT US FOR BREAKFAST. HAVE A DRINK. I'LL CHECK ON YOU LATER.
THEN A COUPLE YEARS LATER I GET A VISIT FROM THESE SPACE A-HOLES AND THEY HAVE THESE PET FLYING BRAINS. ONE OF THEM IS STILL MISSING.
NOT TO BE OUTDONE, CAIN RETURNED WITH MORE BRAIN ACTION AROUND 2001. I KILLED HIM FOR GOOD THIS TIME.
13 MISSED CALLS

I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE WHAT YEAR IT IS NOW, BUT IT WAS MARCH, I THINK. I WAS ON A CASE.
I RECEIVED A BUNCH OF CALLS ABOUT PEOPLE ACTING ABNORMAL IN ONE SPECIFIC AREA OF LOS FELIZ.
HUH, BUSY FUCKIN' DAY.
OH YEAH, SORRY. MY NAME IS CAL MCDONALD. I'M A PRIVATE DETECTIVE AND I SPECIALIZE IN MONSTERS AND FREAKS.
THE ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR REPORTED TURNED OUT TO BE WORSE THAN I THOUGHT. PEOPLE IN A SIX-BLOCK RADIUS OF LOS FELIZ WERE ATTACKING EACH OTHER, ATTACKING THEMSELVES, RUNNING INTO TRAFFIC NAKED, TAKING BOWEL MOVEMENTS IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR OWN YARD, AND ACTING GENERALLY CRAZY.
IT WAS MADNESS.

AND EVEN WEIRDER WHEN AS SOON AS I HIT THE PROBLEM AREA MY RADIO WENT HAYWIRE, SCREECHING AND SQUAWKING ON BOTH A.M. AND F.M. VERY ODD.
CAL.
GAH!
AS SOON AS MY HEART STARTS UP AGAIN, I'M GOING TO SHOOT YOU.
SORRY. WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE TROUBLE?
NEAR AS I CAN FIGURE PEOPLE ARE GOING NUTS. ONE SECOND THEY'RE FINE, THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY START ACTING LIKE JERRY LEWIS ON ACID.
PERHAPS THEY ARE DRUGGED, OR IT'S MASS HYPNOSIS.
WE'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH. THIS IS THE--
I'M NOT GONNA RULE OUT EITHER.
PUTTIN' OUT THE CALL! PUTTIN' OUT THE CALL!
HOW ODD.

BY THE TIME I'D INTERVIEWED A HALF DOZEN PEOPLE WHO'D WITNESSED THE CRAZIES, THE L.A.P.D. DECIDED TO GET IN ON THE ACT. NEAR AS I CAN TELL THEY JUST COPIED WHAT I DID, BUT HAD NO IDEAS ONCE THEY WERE DONE.
THE L.A.P.D. AND ME ARE STRICTLY ON THE OUTS, SO I MADE MYSELF SCARCE AND CHASED A FEW LEADS.
HAND ME THE MAP IN THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT.
CHECK THIS OUT, DEAD BOY. THE CLUSTER IS ALMOST A PERFECT SIX-BLOCK RADIUS AND LOOK, THEY'RE ALL IN A CIRCLE.
NOW, IF I CONNECT THE DOTS...THE LINES ALL INTERSECT...OVER A SINGLE HOUSE IN THE CENTER.
AND HOW DOES THIS WORK?
IT WAS A STUPID TRICK I SAW ON "DRAGNET" WHEN I WAS A KID AND I'LL BE DAMNED IF IT DIDN'T WORK.
YOU'LL SEE.
GOD BLESS YOU, JACK WEBB.

SHRIEEEK
WELL I'LL BE DAMNED.
TOL' YA.
THESE PEOPLE SEEM TO BE IN SOME KIND OF TRANCE. WE CAN'T JUST KILL THEM.
I KNOW. I KNOW. HELP ME OUT A LITTLE, WILL YA?
THANK YOU.
OH NO, YOU DON'T.
YOU COMING OR NOT?
I'LL BE A MOMENT.

HELLO? ANYBODY HOME?
TIN FOIL
WRAP
REYNOL
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THAT.
WAIT UNTIL YOU SEE THIS.
IS THAT TINFOIL?

THAT'S THE WAY IT IS SOMETIMES.
YOU REMEMBER THAT FLYING BRAIN YOU DIDN'T WANT ME TO KILL A WAYS BACK? I THINK YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT NOT WANTING TO HARM AN INNOCENT CREATURE.
VAGUELY.
WELL, THIS IS IT AND I'M THINKING BIG BRAIN HERE IS TRYING TO PHONE HOME.
THIS TIME I'M KILLING IT AND YOU CAN'T STOP ME.
I WON'T.
UH-OH. LOOKS LIKE BUTTHEAD WANTS TO FIGHT.
SOMETIMES CASES COME BACK TO HAUNT YOU.

HUH.
THUD
BOOM
BUT ONE THING YOU CAN COUNT ON IS THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A CONSTANT STREAM OF MONSTERS, FREAKS, AND A-HOLES.
THAT'S WHY MY RULE OF THUMB IS SHOOT FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS AT THE WAKE.
THERE'S A BAR NEAR HERE THAT MAKES A MEAN WHISKEY HORCHATA. MIND IF WE STOP OFF?
NO.
ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH FLYING BRAINS FROM OUTER SPACE.
The End

THE CREEPY TREE

story
STEVE NILES

art
KYLE HOTZ

colors
MICHELLE MADSEN

letters
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®

I'VE NEVER BEEN A FAN OF THE WOODS. I DON'T MIND A TREE NOW AND THEN. I MEAN, I LIKE TO BREATHE AS MUCH AS THE NEXT GUY, BUT I COULD GO THE REST OF MY CRAPPY LIFE WITHOUT STEPPING FOOT IN THE WOODS AND I'D BE A HAPPY LITTLE WASTE OF SPACE.
MY NAME IS CAL MCDONALD. I'M A DETECTIVE, BUT I DON'T DEAL WITH NORMAL, EVERYDAY CRIME. I DEAL SOLELY IN THE BIZARRE, THE MACABRE, AND THE SUPERNATURAL. I'D LIKE TO SAY IT WAS MY CHOSEN PROFESSION BUT THAT WOULD BE A BIG-ASS LIE BECAUSE IT CAME LOOKING FOR ME. YOU MIGHT SAY I HAVE THE WORST FUCKING LUCK IN THE WORLD.
I GOT A CALL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT FROM AN OLD COP BUDDY OF MINE, LARRY DECKER. HE DROPPED OFF THE FORCE A FEW YEARS BACK AND BECAME A PARK RANGER. HE'D SEEN ONE TOO MANY KID'S BRAINS ON THE STREETS AND RAN FOR THE WOODS. I DIDN'T REALLY BLAME HIM.
EVIDENTLY, THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THE WOODS THAT WAS SCARING LARRY.

I DROVE UP NORTH FROM THE VALLEY TO THE ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST. I'D BEEN UP FOR THREE DAYS STRAIGHT WITHOUT A WINK OF SLEEP BECAUSE I'D STOPPED DRINKING. MY DIET WAS REDUCED TO PILLS AND CIGARETTES. I FELT LIKE CRAP ON TOAST.
LATELY IT SEEMED EVERYBODY I KNEW WAS EITHER DEAD, DYING, OR IN DANGER OF BEING KILLED. I WAS TENSE TO SAY THE LEAST. A WAVE OF SUPERNATURAL MURDERS HAD BEEN RIPPING THROUGH L.A. THE COPS DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE, WHICH LEFT ME HOLDING THE BAG. IF THEY'D JUST OPEN THEIR EYES, STUFF LIKE VAMPIRES AND FLESH EATERS COULD BE WIPED OFF THE PLANET FOR GOOD.
BUT I DIGRESS.
I PARKED THE NOVA AND WALKED DOWN A PARK PATH IN THE WOODS AND FOUND LARRY DECKER WAITING FOR ME OUTSIDE HIS LINCOLN-LOG OFFICE.
I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT HIS HAT AND HE DIDN'T SAY I LOOKED LIKE SHIT. INSTEAD HE LAUNCHED INTO A STORY EVEN I HAD TROUBLE BUYING.
EVIDENTLY A TREE HAD BEEN KILLING HIKERS.

AS LARRY TOLD ME HIS STORY, HE LED ME TO THE LOCATION OF THE STRANGE DEATHS. WE WERE IN DEEP, THICK WOODS AND I WAS WIRED AND PISSED AND NOT BELIEVING WHAT I WAS HEARING.
THE WAY LARRY EXPLAINED IT, MORE THAN A DOZEN HIKERS HAD GONE MISSING AND ALL THEIR BELONGINGS, INCLUDING THE CLOTHES OFF THEIR BACKS, WERE FOUND AROUND ONE PARTICULAR TREE.
INSTEAD OF TELLING HIM I THOUGHT HE'D LOST HIS MIND, I WAITED TO RESERVE JUDGMENT. WHEN WE CAME TO THE SPOT OF THE DISAPPEARANCES WE BOTH STOPPED COLD.
THE TREE IN QUESTION WAS THERE, PERCHED ON TOP OF A HILL BY ITSELF. EVERY OTHER TREE WITHIN A 100-YARD RADIUS WAS, WELL, GONE.
WEIRD. PRETTY BALD FOR A FOREST.
I WAS HERE AN HOUR AGO... AND THE PLACE WAS DENSE WOODS.
I'D SEEN SOME WEIRD SHIT IN MY LIFE, BUT THIS TOOK THE CAKE.

I'D SEEN MONSTERS MADE OUT OF CLAY, AND BODIES RISE FROM THE GRAVE, BUT NEVER, IN ALL MY YEARS, HAD I ACTUALLY LAID EYES ON A KILLER TREE. I TOLD LARRY I HAD SOME IDEAS. I WAS LYING. AT BEST I HAD SOME WILD SHOTS IN THE DARK.
WE STAYED BACK WHERE THERE WERE STILL TREES. HOPEFULLY WE WERE SAFELY OUT OF RANGE. I SCANNED THE BARREN INCLINE--DISTURBED EARTH WHERE THE TREES MUST HAVE STOOD BEFORE. MY MIND RACED AND REELED. IF THE TREES HAD BEEN TORN OUT OF THE GROUND, THERE'D BE A LOT OF DIRT AND DEBRIS. THAT WASN'T THE CASE.
THAT MEANT THE TREES--AND PROBABLY THE MISSING HIKERS--HAD BEEN PULLED DOWN, BENEATH THE EARTH.
WHICH MEANT, AT LEAST IN MY FRAZZLED BRAIN, THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING MUCH LARGER THAN A TREE BENEATH THE HILL, AND IT WAS USING THE FOREST AS ITS PERSONAL FEEDING GROUND.

BUT SOMEHOW THAT TREE WAS THE HAIR ON THIS SUPERNATURAL ZIT. THE LONE TREE WAS THE KEY, AND I WAS FEELING JUST SUICIDAL ENOUGH TO MAKE THE RUN.
WEIRD TIMES CALL FOR WEIRD MEASURES.
BAM

SOMETIMES CRAZY WORKS.
SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T.

THAT'S WHY I ALWAYS LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN FOR IMPROVISATIONS.
GO!
SKRUNK

WHAT CAN I SAY? I TOOK A SHOT AND IT WORKED.
I STILL HAD NO EXPLANATION. IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANYTHING-- A FREAK FROM SPACE, A MONSTER FROM THE EARTH'S CORE, OR SATAN'S ANAL WART.
I DIDN'T KNOW AND I DIDN'T CARE. SOMETIMES ALL THAT MATTERED WAS STOPPING THE DAMN THING.
I GOT OUT OF THOSE WOODS FAST AND HEADED BACK TO L.A. MAYBE THIS ONE REMAINED A MYSTERY, BUT TOMORROW NIGHT WAS BOUND TO ROLL AROUND WITH A NEW NIGHTMARE.
The End.

MY DEMON BABY

story
STEVE NILES

art
NICK STAKAL

colors
MICHELLE MADSEN

letters
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®

I HAD SOME BIG IDEAS ONCE.
ONCE I THOUGHT I COULD HAVE A NORMAL LIFE. I MET A GIRL, SABRINA. BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME.
I LET HER GET CLOSE. I EVEN LET HER COME WITH ME ON CASES.
SHE'S DEAD NOW...BECAUSE OF ME...JUST LIKE BRUEGER, AND GRIMSHAW, AND A COUPLE DOZEN OTHER PEOPLE WHO I LET GET CLOSE TO ME.
NO TRESPASSING
AND NOW SABRINA IS ONE OF THEM, ONE OF THE UNDEAD, CREATED AT THE FANGS OF ONE OF THE OLDEST KNOWN VAMPIRES.
SHE MIGHT COME AFTER ME, BUT THE WAY I SEE IT, I DESERVE IT. I'M NOT GOING AFTER HER.
I OWE HER THAT MUCH.

I HAD A BIG IDEA ABOUT STARTING A WAR, JUST GOING OUT AND KILLING EVERY LAST FUCKING UNDEAD, UNNATURAL THING I COULD FIND.
BUT I STOPPED DOWNTOWN FIRST.
I GOT BACK INTO SOME OLD HABITS.
AND THAT WAS THE END OF MY BIG IDEAS.

NOW I'M HERE, IN SOME ABANDONED HOUSE DOWN OFF LAUREL CANYON.
CRUNCH
CRASH
WHEN I FIRST GOT TO L.A. I SMOKED A VAMPIRE OUT OF HERE, AND NOW LOOK AT ME, ON THE JUNK, HIDING OUT WHERE I USED TO HUNT.
I COULDN'T GO HOME. NOT WITH COUNCILMAN BENSON, BRUEGER'S WIDOWER, ON MY ASS.
MY APARTMENT HAS BEEN SURROUNDED BY COPS SINCE I BROKE OUT OF THE HOSPITAL.
HEEEEY...
WORD ON THE STREET IS THAT HE HAS ENOUGH TRUMPED-UP CHARGES FILED WITH HIS COP BUDDIES TO PUT ME AWAY.
SO, ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE GOING FUCKING WRONG, IT TURNS OUT I AM A FUGITIVE.
THIS SHIT-HOLE WAS THE ONLY PLACE I COULD GO.
W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
CAL...

WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING?
I HAVE OFFICIALLY HIT ROCK BOTTOM, AND REALLY, I DON'T GIVE A FLYING FUCK.
I MEAN, REALLY, WHAT IS LEFT FOR ME TO CARE ABOUT?

CAL?
MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS HAVE OFFERED YOU A CLEANER, SAFER PLACE WHILE YOU'RE HIDING OUT.
flik flik flik
YOU'RE FFFFUCKING BROTHERSH AND SISTERS D-DITCHED US WHEN WE NEEDED HELPH.
THEY WERE FRIGHTENED, CAL.
THEY THOUGHT THE NOSFERATU WAS UNBEATABLE.
flik
NO, NO, NO, NO.
THAZ, THAZ, THAZ *BUUULLSHIT!*

IF THEY'D BACKED US UP... MAYBE SABRINA WOULDN'T HAVE...
YOU CANNOT BLAME THE GHOULS. THEY HAVE HELPED YOU TOO MANY TIMES IN THE--
JUS' FUGGIN' SHUT UP AND LEAVE ME ALONE, OKAY?

SMAKK
uuuuuh...
I CANNOT STAND BY AND ALLOW THIS, CAL.
WHY? YOU NEVER GAVE A SHIT BEFORE.
DO NOT MISTAKE TOLERANCE FOR APPROVAL.
I WILL NOT LET YOU DO THIS TO YOURSELF AGAIN.
KRASH

THAT TEARS IT. YOU SON OF A *BITCH!*
THAP
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO.
PUMMEL SOME SENSE INTO YOU?
I'M TIRED. I'M WANTED. I JUST DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH...
I CAN'T GO HOME. I CAN'T GET ANY WORK, AND REALLY...

WHAM!!
I DON'T CARE ANYMORE!
WHOK
ALL RIGHT! ENOUGH!
BAM!
BAM
OKAY, OKAY...I'M OKAY.

Ugh...I'M SO NOT FUCKING OKAY.
KEEPING BUSY WILL HELP... I HAVE A CASE FOR YOU.
YEAH? WHAT IS IT?
A FATHER ORTEGA AT ST. CHARLES BORROMEO CATHOLIC CHURCH IS IN NEED OF HELP. MY INFORMATION WAS NOT SPECIFIC, ONLY THAT HE WAS IN SOME SORT OF TROUBLE.
A PRIEST IN TROUBLE? I CAN'T IMAGINE.
I'M KEEPING THE PILLS.
VERY WELL. A SLOWER DESCENT PERHAPS.
WHEN DID YOU BECOME MY FUCKING MOTHER?
FATHER ORTEGA. ST. CHARLES BORROMEO CATHOLIC CHURCH? YOU COMING?
I WILL LINGER. CHURCHES MAKE ME... UNEASY.
YOU AND ME BOTH, DEAD BOY.

THANK YOU FOR COMING, MR. MCDONALD.
SSSSS
ARE YOU CAL MCDONALD?
'FRAID SO. YOU FATHER ORTEGA?
YES. PLEASE, COME THIS WAY...WHERE WE CAN SPEAK IN PRIVATE.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, FATHER?
I AM TOLD YOU ARE A MAN WHO CAN BE TRUSTED WITH...UNUSUAL MATTERS.
I CAN BE TRUSTED BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS TO BLAB TO.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF A MAN NAMED ERIK BOCHA OR A GROUP CALLING THEMSELVES THE CHILDREN OF THE FALLEN?
NO.
IS THAT WHO YOU WANT ME TO CHECK OUT?
THAT AND MORE, I HOPE.
HOW ABOUT WE FAST-FORWARD TO WHAT YOU WANT?
IT IS DIFFICULT TO SPEAK OF.
THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN TELL ME THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN, HEARD OF, OR DEALT WITH, SO FIRE AWAY, FADDA.
THIS GROUP, THEY ARE A CULT... A SATANIC CULT, AND BOCHA IS RUMORED TO BE THEIR LEADER.
NOW, THAT WASN'T TOO HARD, WAS IT? ARE YOU JUST WORRIED THAT THERE'S A SATANIC CULT OR IS THERE SOMETHING SPECIFIC ABOUT THESE LOSERS THAT BOTHERS YOU?
THAT IS THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE CENTURY...WHAT BOCHA MAY BE DOING COULD RESULT IN THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT.
NOT TO KNOCK YOU, FATHER, BUT I'VE HEARD THAT BEFORE.

YOU ARE NOT THE FIRST I'VE ASKED TO LOOK INTO BOCHA...I SENT A YOUNG PRIEST WHEN I FIRST CAUGHT WORD OF WHAT THEY MIGHT BE DOING...
THIS IS HOW HE WAS RETURNED TO ME.
YOU TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS?
JUST YOU.
YOU BETTER TURN IT INTO THE POLICE IN CASE YOU'RE BEING SET UP. LEAVE OUT THE DEVIL-CULT PART, THOUGH.
WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS BOCHA GUY IS TRYING TO DO?
SINCE YOU SAID I CAN BE CANDID...I BELIEVE THAT BOCHA IS TRYING TO GIVE FLESH TO SATAN...TO BRING HIM TO EARTH.
PEOPLE HAVE TRIED. MOST WIND UP GETTING THEMSELVES KILLED.

I'LL LOOK INTO THINGS, BUT I DON'T WORK FOR FREE.
OH, OF COURSE. I DIDN'T THINK YOU DID.
WILL A THOUSAND DOLLARS BE SUFFICIENT TO GET YOU STARTED?
FOR A GRAND I'LL GIVE YOU A LAP DANC--
SORRY, FATHER. YEAH, I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN FIND OUT.
AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT THIS WHOLE BRINGING SATAN TO EARTH.
LIKE I SAID, A LOT OF A-HOLES HAVE TRIED, BUT NONE HAVE EVER SUCCEEDED.

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL.

PRAISE SATAN, MOTHER.
PRAISE SATAN, PAPA.

I LIED TO THE PRIEST.
FUCK 'IM. I'M NOT CATHOLIC.
I'D HEARD OF THIS ERIK BOCHA BEFORE, BUT IT WASN'T IN CONNECTION WITH ANY DEVIL-WORSHIPING CULT.
WHEN I RAN INTO HIM HE WAS RUNNING A PSYCHIC SCAM IN SILVER LAKE AND HE CALLED HIMSELF SWAMI BOCHAKA. HE WAS YOUR STANDARD SCAM-ARTIST TOOL.
UNFORTUNATELY FOR BOCHA ONE OF HIS FAKE-ASS SÉANCES GOT A LITTLE TOO REAL WHEN THE SPIRIT OF THE PERSON HE WAS SCAMMING BROKE THROUGH AND TRIED TO DRAG BOCHA INTO THE LIGHT, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING.
I ACTUALLY SAVED HIS ASS, BUT I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN AFTER THAT.
2N

I HAD FILES ON BOCHA. LAST KNOWN ADDRESS AND ALL THAT CRAP.
PROBLEM WAS I COULDN'T GET INTO MY OFFICE/APARTMENT WITHOUT GETTING ARRESTED.
THERE WERE PLAINCLOTHES COPS SITTING IN A CAR RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET WATCHING MY PLACE.
I KNEW THEY WERE COPS RIGHT AWAY. NOBODY ELSE WOULD DARE LEAVE THEIR HOMES IN SUITS THAT UGLY.
CAL.
GAH!
DID I STARTLE YOU?
NO, I'M FINE. MY HEART SHOULD GET STARTED AGAIN ANY SECOND NOW.
SEE THOSE COPS?
NO.
TWELVE O'CLOCK. TWO LUMPY DUDES IN BROWN SUITS.
Ah... YES.

MO', CAN YOU DISTRACT THEM FOR A FEW MINUTES SO I CAN SLIP INSIDE?
IT WOULD BE MY PLEASURE.
THE GHOUL SOUNDED A LITTLE TOO EAGER. SOMETIMES I WONDERED ABOUT THAT DEAD FUCKER--WHEN HE KICKED MY ASS FOR SHOOTING UP I SAW A WHOLE NEW SIDE.
HE COULD BE MEAN AS A PIT BULL WHEN HE WANTED.
THIS DETAIL IS DEAD IN THE WATER. MCDONALD HASN'T SHOWED FOR A WEEK.
WHAT'S COUNCILMAN'S BEEF WITH MCDONALD ANYWAY, AND WHY IS THE L.A.P.D. PLAYING LAP DOG?
BEATS WORKIN'.
WHAT THE--
DOES IT MATTER? BENSON'S GOT THE DEPARTMENT BY THEIR BALLS. AS LONG AS HE HOLDS THAT SEAT THE HIGHER-UPS ARE GONNA KEEP HIS BALLS MOIST.

--FUCK?!
HOLY CHRIST!
CRUNCH
AHHHHHHH!

IS THIS SUFFICIENT?
AND THEN SOME. THANKS, PAL.
FREEZE, MOTHERFUCKER!
CALLING ALL UNITS! CAR 13 IN PURSUIT OF...Uh...FUCKING FRANKENSTEIN!
I PREPARED MYSELF FOR THE WORST.
AND I STILL WASN'T PREPARED FOR THIS.
DO NOT CROSS
POLICE

MOTHERFUCKERS!
THEY DIDN'T SEARCH FOR SHIT.
THEY JUST FUCKED UP THE PLACE.
COUNCILMAN BENSON'S WAY OF SAYING HE WAS GOING TO FUCK ME UP GIVEN THE CHANCE.
THAT BEAT DOWN IN THE ALLEY WAS JUST A WARM-UP.
GOT IT.

CROS
THERE WASN'T MUCH LEFT.
I TOOK WHAT THERE WAS-- SOME CLOTHES, SOME BOOKS, SOME OF MY FILES THE COPS HADN'T URINATED ALL OVER, AND, SURPRISINGLY, A BAG OF WEED AND SOME PILLS.
THE BAG OF WEED WAS SITTING ON THE COFFEE TABLE. THE PILLS WERE IN THE BATHROOM.
YEAH, SOME SEARCH.
DICKS.
IT LOOKED LIKE BOCHA'S LAST KNOWN ADDRESS WAS THE PLACE WHERE I BUSTED HIM.
THAT WAS TWO YEARS AGO.
I DECIDED TO CRUISE THE SILVER LAKE-LOS FELIZ AREA AND SEE WHAT SCUM WAS FLOATING AROUND.
IF THERE REALLY WAS A BABY, SATAN'S KID OR NOT, IT DESERVED BETTER COMPANY THAN THAT SCUMBAG.

COME IN! COME IN AND BEHOLD *THE CHILD!*
AND PLEASE DONATE GENEROUSLY BEFORE AND AFTER YOUR VIEWING. YOU MIGHT BE PAYING YOUR WAY OUT OF THE APOCALYPSE!
THANK YOU! THANK YOU!
WELCOME ALL! MASTER BOCHA AND HIS MISTRESS VIRGINIA WAIT INSIDE WITH THE CHILD!
AS SOON AS THEY ATTEND TO IMPORTANT BUSINESS YOU WILL ALL HAVE A TURN INSIDE!
DOUG, BOCHA WANTS TO SEE THE CASH.
ALL RIGHT, RON. TELL HIM TO HURRY UP IN THERE. WE DON'T OPEN THE DOORS SOON, THESE FREAKS'LL TEAR UP THE JOINT.

ANOTHER BASKETFULL OF DONATIONS, RON? PRAISE SATAN!
YES, MISTRESS VIRGINIA, AND DOUG WAS WONDERING WHEN PEOPLE WOULD BE ALLOWED IN TO SEE THE CHILD.
WE'LL OPEN THE DOORS JUST AS SOON AS ERIK AND I HAVE SELECTED HER NANNY.
AND MY GOODNESS, ERIK, WE CERTAINLY DO HAVE A FINE SELECTION OF NANNY APPLICANTS, DON'T YOU THINK?
INDEED, MY DEAR.
IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR THE CHILD TO BE BORN OF THE SEED OF SATAN. THE CHILD MUST BE RAISED AS THE CHILD OF HELL IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF *UTMOST* EVIL.
AND THAT IS WHY WE HAVE CHOSEN ***GRETA HERGEMUNTZ*** AS OUR DAUGHTER'S NANNY!

YOU VILL NOT REGRET YOUR DECISION, MEIN FÜHRER!
OH, YOU CAN CALL US ERIK AND VIRGINIA. WE'D RATHER KEEP IT INFORMAL.
VEZZY WELL. I VILL DO MY BEST!
AND NOW, BEFORE THE GUESTS COME IN, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET OUR LITTLE BUNDLE FROM HELL.
WE HAVE DECIDED TO NAME HER UNA... *UNA BOCHA, DAUGHTER OF SATAN!*
SHE'S A CUTIE, ISN'T SHE?
SIE IST SCHÖN!
NOW, I HOPE THAT DOG OF YOURS WON'T HARM THE CHILD.
DON'T VORRY, MRS. BOCHA. SCRUFFY IZ ZEE MOST GENTLE PUPPY IN ZEE VORLD.
I VILL DEMONSTRATE.
AHHHHH!

SEE! GENTLE AS A LAAAMB.
VERY IMPRESSIVE.
Ooo, I HAVE CHILLS. SHE IS GOING TO GROW UP TO BE SUCH AN ABSOLUTE *STINKER!*
WE CAN ONLY HOPE, MY DEAR.
SOMEDAY THIS LITTLE GIRL WILL BRING THE APOCALYPSE AND WE'LL BE STANDING RIGHT NEXT TO HER.
AND WHEN THAT DAY COMES, EVERYBODY WHO EVER LAUGHED AT ME OR CALLED ME A CON ARTIST WILL PAY WITH THEIR ETERNAL *SOULS!*

TURNED OUT THOSE PILLS WERE EPHEDRINE TABS. NOTHING AS STRONG AS I'D HOPED.
TRUCK-DRIVER SPEED.
I WAS AS JITTERY AS A RABBIT ON COKE, BUT INSTEAD OF GOING AND FINDING SOMETHING GOOD, I CONTINUED FOLLOWING MY BOCHA LEAD.
BING-BONG
PSYCHIC
PALMSTRY
TAROT
PSYCHIC
FIRST STOP...THE PLACE WHERE I RESCUED BOCHA FROM THAT ANGRY SPIRIT.
WELCOME! I AM MISS DONNA. HOW CAN I HELP YOU--
WAIT! I'M GETTING STRONG VIBRATIONS FROM YOU.
THAT'S BODY ODOR. I HAVEN'T SHOWERED IN A WEEK.
I SENSE A GREAT POWER AROUND YOU... AND A GREAT DEAL OF PAIN RISING FROM YOUR--
I SENSE THAT MISS DONNA HAS BILLS TO PAY. I SEE RENT IS DUE.
Oh, OKAY, I GOTCHA, LADY.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, LADY. I DIDN'T COME HERE FOR THIS CRAP. I NEED SOME REALLY BASIC, NON-MIND-READING INFO.

SO HOW CAN I HELP YOU...uh...
CAL. CAL MCDONALD. I'M A PRIVATE--
DETECTIVE? AS IN *THE* CAL MCDONALD?!
UNLESS THERE'S ANOTHER LOSER OUT THERE LIKE ME, YEAH. YOU HEARD OF ME, huh?
FROM THAT WONDERFUL MAGAZINE, *THE SPECULATOR!*
CHRIST.
DON'T LIKE THE MAGAZINE?
NO. I MEAN YES...I MEAN...um... I KNEW THE WOMAN WHO PUT THE MAG TOGETHER AND SHE...uh...PASSED AWAY ABOUT A WEEK AGO.
Oh, YOU POOR THING! COME HERE. WOULD YOU LIKE SOME HERBAL TEA?
LADY, REALLY, I'M FINE. I JUST WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE GUY WHO RAN THIS JOINT BEFORE YOU.
Oh, GOD. WHAT HAS BOCHA DONE NOW?

CRAZY AND HUGGY MAYBE, BUT THE PSYCHIC LADY HAD ALL THE INFO I NEEDED.
SHE KNEW BOCHA. SHE HAD PURCHASED THE BUSINESS FROM HIM FIVE YEARS EARLIER AND HAD STAYED IN TOUCH WITH HIM OVER THE YEARS DUE TO HIS INCREASING INTEREST IN THE SUPERNATURAL.
I HAD AN ADDRESS. BOCHA'S NEW PLACE WAS ONLY A FEW MILES FROM HIS OLD.
FROM THE SOUNDS OF IT, BOCHA GOT PRETTY SCARED AFTER I SAVED HIS ASS FROM THAT VENGEFUL SPIRIT, BUT HE DIDN'T STAY SCARED FOR LONG.
ONCE A CON MAN, ALWAYS A CON MAN.
EVEN IN THE UNKNOWN, BOCHA FOUND AN ANGLE.
MONEY IS POWER AND POWER IS MONEY. BE THE FATHER OF THE DEVIL AND YOU'RE SURE TO TURN A PROFIT.
VROOOM
BOCHA WAS ONE STUPID, ALBEIT DANGEROUS, FUCKING A-HOLE.
I WASN'T ESPECIALLY THRILLED PLAYING THE CHURCH'S ERRAND BOY, BUT WHAT BOCHA WAS DOING OR HAD ALREADY DONE WAS WRONG.
WHICH GOT ME THINKING ABOUT THE KID I WAS SUPPOSED TO SNATCH...

OKAY, SO IT WAS BORN AS THE RESULT OF SOME CRAZY SATANIC RITUAL, BUT WAS THE CHILD DESTINED TO BE AN EVIL FORCE OR WAS IT JUST THE WAY BOCHA PLANNED ON RAISING IT?
WHAT THE FUCK?!
WHEN I SNAGGED THE KID AND BROUGHT IT TO THE PRIEST, THEY WOULD KILL THE BRAT FOR SURE.
SUDDENLY I WAS STRUCK WITH THE ODDEST LINE OF THINKING...I WANTED TO PROTECT THE CHILD FROM BOTH SIDES.
Oh FER CRYIN' OUT LOUD.
I MEAN I WAS RAISED BY A NORMAL FAMILY AND LOOK AT THE MESS I TURNED INTO.
I WASN'T GOING TO PLAY JUDGE, JURY, AND EXECUTIONER FOR ANYBODY.
I THINK I LOST THEM, CAL.
YOU THINK SO? JUST GET THE HELL IN THE CAR.
THE BIG QUESTION WAS HOW DO YOU FUCK OVER THE DEVIL AND THE VATICAN AND GET AWAY WITH IT?

FATHER, PLEASE. WE UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHURCH IN MIND, BUT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU LET US HANDLE IT. YOU KNOW HOW WE FEEL ABOUT OUTSIDERS.
I...I JUST WANT TO HELP.
AND NOTHING WOULD HELP US MORE, FATHER, THAN YOU TELLING US...

...WHO DID YOU HIRE TO FIND THE CHILD?
F...FATHER DUME...I GAVE MY WORD AS A PRIEST--
THE CHURCH AND YOUR ETERNAL SOUL ARE ALL MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR WORD, ORTEGA!
SMAK
Y...YOU CAN'T...YOU HAVE NO RIGHT...
WE'RE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. WE CAN DO ANYTHING WE WANT.
GARIBALDI, PHILIPPE? PLEASE HAVE THE *WARRIOR* BROUGHT INSIDE.

MAYBE *THAT* WILL CONVINCE THE GOOD FATHER.
HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR HISTORY, FATHER?
WHAT? I'M NOT SURE WHAT YOU MEAN? I'M VERY CONFUSED.

FOLLOWING THE VICTORY OF THE *FIRST CRUSADE* A GROUP OF KNIGHTS OFFERED THEMSELVES TO THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AS A MILITARY FORCE. THIS PROPOSED MILITARY FORCE HAD THE MANDATE OF PROTECTING CHRISTIAN PILGRIMS WHO WERE EN ROUTE TO THE HOLY LAND IN THE YEAR 1118 A.D.
NOW MORE THAN 800 YEARS LATER ONE OF THESE GREAT KNIGHTS STILL LIVES.
AND LIVES TO SERVE, PROTECT, AND AVENGE THE WAYS OF THE CHURCH.
DO YOU KNOW THE KNIGHTS I REFER TO, FATHER?
I... I...
AND WILL YOU TELL US WHO YOU HIRED TO SEARCH FOR THE SATAN CHILD?
I CANNOT BETRAY MY OATH. NOT EVEN FOR THE CHURCH.
VERY WELL THEN. PREPARE YOURSELF, FATHER, FOR A HARD LESSON IN HISTORY.
SAY YOUR PRAYERS AND SAY HELLO TO...

...THE LAST TEMPLAR KNIGHT!
ONE LAND. ONE GOD. ONE ORDER.

NOW... FATHER...TELL US WHOM YOU HIRED.
I WILL NOT.
GIVE US THE NAME.
GHHHAH!
THE NAME?
C...CA... MAA...MAAAC...
EASE UP, WARRIOR. THE FATHER IS TRYING TO SPEAK.

C...CAL MCDONALD. HIS NAME...IS *CAL MCDONALD.*
THERE.
NOW YOU CAN GREET YOUR MAKER WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
SHLINKK
AND THE GREAT TEMPLAR WARRIOR WILL TRACK DOWN THIS MCDONALD AND THE DEVIL CHILD AND *KILL THEM BOTH!*

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE PSYCHIC'S AND BOCHA'S PLACE THE IDEA FIRST ENTERED MY HEAD.
MAYBE SABRINA WAS RIGHT. MAYBE I DO HAVE A DEATH WISH.
LIKE KARLOFF SAID, MAYBE I BELONG DEAD.
I'D NEVER THOUGHT OF OFFING MYSELF BEFORE, BUT THE PAIN INSIDE HAD FINALLY TOPPED OUT AND WITHOUT MY USUAL DOSES OF SELF-MEDICATION, I KIND OF LIKED THE IDEA.
WHAT THE FUCK WAS I TRYING TO PROVE, THAT I COULD HAVE THE LONGEST, SUCKIEST-ASS LIFE OF ANYBODY?
THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH IDEAS LIKE SUICIDE...ONCE THEY CREEP INSIDE, IT'S TOUGH TO GET THEM TO LEAVE.
IT WOULD BE SO EASY.
ONE YANK OF THE WHEEL AND BOOM, NO MORE FREAKS, NO MORE DEATH, AND NO MORE FUCKING MONSTERS.
ffoom!
Ah, WHAT THE FUCK.

SKREEEE
WHAMM
hssssssssssssss
tink tink tink

Uhhh.
AM I IN HEAVEN?
SON. OF. A. BITCH!
?? ?!
hhssssssssssssssssss

GODDAMMIT, SPIVEY. LET ME DIE ALREADY!
SNAP
POP
TING
POP!
SNAP!!
I CAN'T EVEN DIE WITHOUT SOME SUPERNATURAL FREAK FUCKING IT UP.
POP.
SNAP
Ah, FUCK IT.
MIGHT AS WELL SAVE THE STUPID WORLD.
VRRMMMMMMM

MEANWHILE, THE SATANIC BABY PARTY WAS GOING ON STRONG...
WHOOO!
HERE'S TO THE CHILD!
WHOOO!
HERE'S TO ARMAGEDDON!
THERE'S GONNA BE A SATAN-AND-GOD SMACKDOWN!
WHOOO!
THE SATAN WORSHIPERS WERE HAVING A MAJOR SHINDIG. DIDN'T TAKE MUCH TO FIGURE THE KID WAS INSIDE.
THAT'S WHO THE PARTY WAS FOR.
WHAT I NEEDED WAS SOME KIND OF PLAN.
AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO BLOW OFF SOME STEAM AND RUN IN THERE SHOOTING, I COULDN'T RISK THE KID'S LIFE, EVEN IF IT IS SOME KIND OF DEVIL BABY.
PERHAPS THIS SITUATION CALLS FOR SOMETHING LESS GRANDIOSE.
!?
GAAH!
WHY KILL MYSELF WHEN I HAVE YOU TRYING EVERY DAY?
WHAT?
NOTHING.
I BELIEVE I HAVE AN IDEA.
Aw, GAWD.

THIS IS SUCH CLICHÉ BULLSHIT.
IT WILL GAIN US ENTRANCE INTO THE HOUSE.
WHO TALKS LIKE THAT? CAN'T YOU JUST SAY, "IT'LL GET US INSIDE"?
WHAT IS AN "ITTEL"?
SHUT UP. HOW DO I LOOK?
CONVINCING. YOU WILL BLEND RIGHT IN.
Uuuh.
AND ME? DO I LOOK CONVINCING?
crack
CHANGE OF PLAN. WHEN WE GET UP THERE, I SAY WE SPLIT UP AND LOOK FOR THE KID.
IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS, I THINK STAYING TOGETHER WOULD BE WISER.
YEAH, WELL, I'M FEELING UN-FUCKING-CONVENTIONAL TONIGHT. THAT OKAY WITH YOU?!

QUITE THE PARTY. I DOUBT THEY COULD FOCUS EVEN IF THEY DID SPOT US.
THIS IS HOW THEY CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF THE ANTICHRIST?
YEAH, THIS IS NO ENVIRONMENT FOR A KID.
GOOD FUCKING LORD, ARE THEY LISTENING TO HAWKWIND?! WE HAVE TO GET IN THERE AND SAVE THAT POOR KID.
HAIL, PHATAN!
THIS IS GONNA BE A BREEZE. YOU CHECK UPSTAIRS FOR THE KID. I'LL WORK THE MAIN FLOOR. I WANNA GET OUT OF HERE FAST, BEFORE THEY PULL OUT THE JETHRO TULL.
WHAT DO I DO IF I FIND HIM?
GRAB THE BRAT AND SCRAM. I'LL FIND YOU.
DO I KNOW YOU?

DON'T THINK SO, LADY. I THINK I'D REMEMBER YOU.
NO, I NEVER FORGET A FACE...
...OR THE SMELL OF A GOOD MAN'S BLOOD.
SHIT.
MAYBE I TASTED YOU ONCE?
HUH. NO. DOESN'T RING A BELL.
STAY FOCUSED, CAL.
YOU ARE NOT HERE TO KILL VAMPIRES.
SEE YOU AROUND, SISTER. THAT'S A PROMISE.
I'LL BE WAITING.
I WAS THERE TO GET THE SATANIC TIME BOMB IN THE SHAPE OF A...
IT'S A GIRL!
...BABY.

TTTSSSSSSS
ME AND MY BIG FUCKING MOUTH.
YEAH, THIS WAS GOING TO BE A BREEZE.
I HAD A ROOM FULL OF GOD KNOWS WHO. THEY COULD BE SATAN WORSHIPERS, VAMPIRES, OR JUST STUPID GOTH POSERS, SO I HAD TO ASSUME THE WORST.
THAT MEANT THE ODDS WERE ROUGHLY FIFTY TO ONE.
IDIOT.

AND THAT WASN'T COUNTING BOCHA AND HIS WIFE ON THE COUCH. THEY LOOKED LIKE PUSHOVERS, BUT I'D BEEN WRONG BEFORE.
LIKE TWO SECONDS BEFORE, TO BE ACCURATE.
I DIDN'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT THE GIANT BROAD IN THE CORNER STANDING WITH HER BEAR-HORSE-DOG THING.
GRRRRRRR
AS SOON AS I SAW THE KID I KNEW I WASN'T GOING TO BRING HER BACK TO THE PRIEST.
THEY'D LOCK HER AWAY OR WORSE.
I DIDN'T CARE WHO HER PARENTS WERE. SHE WAS JUST A KID AND WHO KNOWS HOW SHE'D TURN OUT IF SHE WAS AROUND THESE LOSERS EVERY DAY TELLING HER SHE'S THE GODDAMNED ANTICHRIST.
NOPE. NO KID DESERVED THAT.

beep beep beep
GET YOUR ASS DOWN HERE. BIG FIGHT IN 10 SEC.
beep beep
I HAD TO AVOID SHOOTING WITH THE BABY AROUND.
BUT AS SOON AS THAT POPPED INTO MY HEAD, I HAD ANOTHER IDEA.

IT WAS BEYOND STUPID AND WOULD MOST LIKELY GET ME KILLED.
BUT I WAS IN THAT KIND OF MOOD, I GUESS.
SHIT.
EXCUSE ME. DON'T I KNOW YOU?
SHIT. SHIT. SHIT.
GAA GOO?

NOBODY MOVES AND NOBODY GETS HURT!
YOU! YOU'RE THAT DETECTIVE!
NOOO! MY BAAAABY!
THE WAY I HEARD IT, YOU DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH HER BIRTH BESIDES AN INCANTATION AND MURDERING AN INNOCENT YOUNG GIRL!
OKAY, PEOPLE! THIS IS THE WAY IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. I'M LEAVING AND THE BABY IS COMING WITH ME. NOBODY TRY ANYTHING OR SO HELP ME...
WAK
HEY! I'M HOLDING A BABY HERE!
JESUS!
I GUESS THAT'S KIND OF A BAD WORD AROUND HERE, huh?

AUUUGH!
CHOMP
THINK I WON'T SHOOT THE DOG?! I'LL SHOOT THE DAMN DOG!!
WAAAH!
YOU DON'T WANT ME TO SHOOT THE DOGGY? I WON'T SHOOT THE DOGGY, NO I WON'T.
THAT WAS A LONG TEN SECONDS!
GRRRRRRR
WHAT SHALL I DO WITH THIS?
MEIN HUNDEBABY!

GEGEN DEN FEIND ANSTÜRMEN!
CAAAAAAAL!
WUNK
GIVE US OUR BABY BACK!
WE MADE HER! SHE'S OURS!
EVERYBODY COOL OUT!
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, BOCHA.
THAT IS THE CHILD OF SATAN HIMSELF. SHE CAN ONLY BRING ABOUT DEATH AND DESTRUCTION.
I SHOULD SHOVE THIS GUN UP YOUR ASS AND FIRE JUST FOR SAYING THAT! SHE'S JUST A KID!

CHOOOOM
AAAAAH!
SINNERS REPENT!
FAITH IS MY ARMOR!
STEEL IS MY SWORD!
CHRIST, WE HAVE A TALKER!

I NEED YOU TO HOLD HER FOR A MINUTE WHILE I HELP OUT MY CHUM. YOU RUN AND I'LL SHOOT YOU. I WILL.
YES. PLEASE. SAVE US!
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.
Hmmm.
I VILL *CRUSH* YOU!
SMACK
NOW I VILL MORDER *YOU* AS VELL!
BIG TALK FROM A DAME COVERED IN MEAT.
VAS?

HUNDEBABY! NO!
GRRRR
NOOOO!
YOU OKAY?
I AM SOAKED IN SALIVA.
COULD BE WORSE. COULD BE BLOOD.
TO FIGHT FOR YOU AND NOT TO MIND THE WOUNDS, TO LABOR AND TO ASK FOR NO REWARD...
...EXCEPT THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I SERVE MY GOD!
CRAP.
ANY IDEAS?
I DUNNO. I'M ALL OUT OF COLD CUTS.

KILL THE CHILD!
AHH! ERIK, DO SOMETHING!
HE'S HERE FOR THE BABY, BOCHA! IF YOU WANT TO SAVE HER, CHUCK HER OVER HERE!
LOOKS LIKE THE END OF THE ROAD, HONEY.
SURE DOES, BABE.
KEEP HER SAFE.
I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF HER, LADY.
I LOVE YOU, MAMAS.
I LOVE YOU, PAPAS. SEE YOU IN HELL.
THWAK

GOD GRANT ME PROWESS IN ALL THINGS, THAT HE MAKE ME SHARP OF MIND AS WITH SKILL. AS MY PREPARATION FOR ALL TEMPTATION, BE MY BLADE AGAINST IT.
THAT IS A PRAYER OF THE TEMPLAR KNIGHTS, BUT THEY DIED OFF CENTURIES AGO.
THANKS FOR THE HISTORY LESSON. FROM THE SMELL OF THIS FUCK'S BREATH, I'D SAY HE'S BEEN DEAD AT LEAST THAT LONG.
GOD GRANT ME THE WISDOM TO CLEANSE THE WORLD OF THIS CHILD!
LIKE HELL.
YOU GOT ANYTHING USEFUL OR YOU JUST SPOUTING HISTORY LESSONS AT ME?
I HAVE NOTHING.
GOD GRANT ME THE WILL TO DESTROY THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST!
CHRIST, HE'S WORSE THAN A FUCKING JEHOVAH'S WITNESS.
GET BACK, PREACHY DEAD THING! BACK!
MO...IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO ME, GRAB THE BABY, OKAY?

PREPARE TO ACCEPT GOD'S LOVE!
NO!
CAL...RUN FOR THE WINDOW... NOW!
I'M NOT LEAVING YOU HERE WITH THAT THING.
I'LL BE FINE. GO!
GAH!
AAH!
COME ON, MO. LET'S GO!
NO CAL. HE WILL FOLLOW. GO. PLEASE, SO I CAN--

GRAB!
AAAAAAH!!

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU COMBINE THE ANTI-CHRIST, THE LAST TEMPLAR, DEAD PRIESTS, AND A GHOUL SPLIT IN TWO?
MY LIFE. THAT'S WHAT YOU GET.
I'D GOTTEN MYSELF INTO SOME FUCKED-UP JAMS IN MY LIFE, BUT THIS ONE TOOK THE CAKE.
CHRIST.
RUN, CAL! RUN!

THE LORD IS MY SWORD!
WHOOSH
HEY!
SPIVEY!
VROOOMM
SCREEEE
SEE YA!

NO YOU DON'T!
YAARGH!
OOF!

SKREEEE
YOU ALL RIGHT?
I AM SORE.
I GUARANTEE YOU, CHURCH-BOY FEELS WORSE...BUT NOT FOR LONG, SO GET THE FUCK IN THE CAR.
SCREEE

WHERE IS THE CHILD?
IN THE BACK.
WHERE DID THE CHILD SAFETY SEAT COME FROM?
NO IDEA.
VRROOOM.

DROP THE WEAPON AND GET DOWN ON THE GROUND!
I WILL NOT FAIL YOU, MY LORD.
OH, MY GOD, I WANT TO LOVE YOU...
NOT THAT I MIGHT GAIN ETERNAL HEAVEN, NOR ESCAPE ETERNAL HELL...
BUT, LORD, TO LOVE YOU JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE MY GOD.
PLEASE, MY GOD, I ASK YOU...

GRANT ME YOUR EYES SO THAT I MAY SEE AND DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES, MY LORD.
YOU ARE GOD'S EYES. FIND THE EVIL...
...SO THAT I MAY VANQUISH IT FROM THIS WORLD!

DOUGHNUTS
NO WAY *I'M* PAYING FOR THE DAMAGE TO THE CAR! NO FUCKING WAY!
WELL MAYBE IF YOU DIDN'T TELL THEM FRANKENSTEIN SMASHED A MAILBOX ON THE HOOD THEY MIGHT HAVE BELIEVED OUR STORY.
OH MAN, OH MAN. LOOKS LIKE OUR LUCK HAS CHANGED.
VROOM
LET'S GET HIS ASS.
CALL IT IN. I'LL DRIVE. SEE IF WE CAN GET SOME BACKUP.
CAL. POLICE.
YEAH? WHAT ELSE IS NEW? I'D RATHER DEAL WITH COPS THAN AN UNDEAD RELIGIOUS NUT-BAG.
MO...MAKE SURE THE BABY IS SECURE AND THEN GRAB MY GUN.
I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.

TAKE IT EASY, DEADHEAD. AS FUN AS IT WOULD BE I DON'T PLAN ON SHOOTING ANY COPS.
YOU SURE YOU CAN DO IT?
TRUST ME. MY AIM IS TRUE.
POP!

AAAAAAH!!
thud
SKRUNCH
THIS IS FUCKING GREAT. JUST FUCKING GREAT! WHAT ELSE CAN HAPPEN TO US IN ONE DAY?
FUCK THIS. NO WAY. I'M NOT EVEN WRITING A REPORT.

THAT WAS GREAT! NICE SHOOTING.
MY PLEASURE.
BUT EVEN IF WE ARE RID OF THE TEMPLAR, HOW LONG UNTIL SOMEONE ELSE COMES LOOKING FOR THE CHILD?
ALWAYS WAITING TO PISS IN MY PUNCH BOWL, AIN'TCHA EEYORE?
WHAT IS AN EEYORE?
NEVER MIND.
WE HAVE TO FIND A PLACE TO HIDE THE KID. SHE CAN'T STAY WITH US.
I KNOW A NICE GHOUL COUPLE WHO--
NOT A CHANCE.
BUT--
NO!
I DON'T FUCKIN' BELIEVE IT. WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED...

GRAB THE KID.
THAT'S IT, PEEPERS. LET'S SEE YOU KEEP UP.
CAL, YOU ARE GOING TOO FAST. THE CHILD.
HANG ON TIGHT!

SKREEEE
splat
splat
splat
splat
THERE! NO MORE NASTY EYEBALLS.
VERY CLEVER, BUT WE STILL NEED TO FIND SANCTUARY FOR THE CHILD.
THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMEBODY WHO CAN TAKE HER IN. RIGHT? ISN'T THAT RIGHT, LIL' BABY??
OH THE BIG BAD GHOUL DOESN'T LIKE THE BABY TALK, ISN'T THAT RIGHT? YES IT IS!
THAT VOICE SCARES ME. PLEASE STOP.

AND DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE THAT IF SHE IS RAISED UNAWARE OF WHO SHE IS SHE WILL LIVE A NORMAL LIFE?
I WAS RAISED BY STRAIGHT-ARROW PARENTS, AND LOOK HOW I TURNED OUT. I DON'T THINK THERE ARE ANY GUARANTEES, BUT I THINK THIS LITTLE CRITTER DESERVES A CHANCE, DON'T YOU?
BUT WHAT IF SHE IS THE ANTICHRIST?
THEN WE'LL BE MEETING AGAIN, WON'T WE? YES WE WILL! YES WE WILL!
YOU DO REALIZE YOU HAVEN'T SMOKED, DRUNK, OR EATEN ANYTHING ILLICIT SINCE WE RESCUED THE CHILD, DON'T YOU?
WHAT'S YOUR POINT?
YOU REMEMBER THAT NICE LADY AND HER SON WE RESCUED FROM THAT CANNIBAL LAST YEAR?
I DON'T RECALL, NO.
THE CANNIBAL LOOKED LIKE JIMMY BUFFETT AND HE ATE A CHUNK OF MY LEG.
DOESN'T RING ANY BELLS.
THAT'S RIGHT. I WAS RIDING SOLO THAT DAY. YOU WERE OFF DOING WHATEVER THE HELL IT IS YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE ALONE.
ANYWAY, THE CANNIBAL KILLED THE LADY'S HUSBAND. LEFT THE KID AN ORPHAN. THEY WERE NICE PEOPLE THOUGH. MAYBE SHE'D--
!?
UM... CAL?
LOOK.
WELL THAT'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T SEE OFTEN.

THE POWER OF MY SWORD COMPELS YOU!
MO'LOCK, TAKE THE KID.
I'VE HAD IT WITH THIS FUCKER.
IF THERE WAS ONE THING I'D LEARNED OVER THE YEARS IT WAS THAT NO AMOUNT OF PLANNING MADE UP FOR GOOD OLD-FASHIONED, IN-YOUR-FACE VIOLENCE.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!
AND THIS SITUATION CALLED FOR IT IN A BIG WAY.
THIS GUY WAS RIGHT OUT OF THE FUCKING BIBLE, A WALKING CHUNK OF HISTORY. I HAD NO CLUE TO THE SECRETS OF HIS ORDER OR ANY OF THAT CRAP.
THIS WAS GOING TO BE SOLVED WITH BULLETS AND KNUCKLES OR I WAS TOTALLY SCREWED.

99¢
THOOM
I FELT A RIB SNAP, AND THAT WET GOING DOWN MY BACK WAS JUST WARM ENOUGH TO BE BLOOD.
PLUS, GUESS WHAT? MUSTARD IN AN OPEN WOUND HURTS LIKE A BITCH!
IT WAS NIGHTS LIKE THIS THAT MADE ME WISH I HAD A PEZ FILLED WITH VICODIN.
AAH! SONOFA-BITCH!
WITH THY BLADE I WILL REMOVE SIN FROM THE WORLD.
WHY DON'T YOU BLOW ME, KILL ME, ANYTHING, JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP!

FZAAPP
INCREDIBLE.
AAARGH!

DAAAAANG.
KRESHH
AAGK!
DID YOU INCINERATE THE BAD PREACHER MANS? YES, YOU DID. YES. YOU. DID!
I FIND THE NOTION OF YOU SPEAKING BABY TALK COMPLETELY TERRIFYING, CAL. PLEASE STOP.

I BELIEVE YOUR ARGUMENT ON THE CHILD'S FATE IS IN DOUBT NOW, DON'T YOU THINK? THIS IS NOT JUST A SIMPLE CASE OF ENVIRONMENT VERSUS GENES.
SHE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING DEVILISH OR BAD. SHE HELPED OUT A COUPLE FRIENDS. WHAT'S SATANIC ABOUT THAT?
THIS LITTLE POP TART?! NO WAY!
REGARDLESS, WE STILL HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING. SHE COULD BE... THE ANTICHRIST.
BESIDES I HAD AN IDEA. REMEMBER THE LADY AND KID I WAS TELLING YOU ABOUT? *
YEAH, THAT'S THEM.
I RECALL YOU TELLING ME THE HUSBAND AND FATHER TO THE BOY WAS EATEN ALIVE IN FRONT OF THEM.
*AS TOLD IN *ALL MY BLOODY THINGS.*
THE LADY, WHAT THE HELL WAS HER NAME...HUGHES... SEEMED LIKE GOOD PEOPLE. AND THERE'S NO RECORD OF MY HELPING THEM, SO THERE'S NO CONNECTION. I BET BABY LASER EYES WOULD BE HAPPY THERE. AND SAFE.
GLENDALE NEXT EXIT
HEY, GRAB ME SOME OF THEM PILLS IN THE ASHTRAY.
NOT IN FRONT OF THE CHILD, CAL.
IT'S FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES! IN CASE YOU DIDN'T NOTICE, I GOT STABBED WITH A *SWORD!*

THAT WAS A GOOD THING YOU DID, CAL.
YEAH, I CAN REALLY FEEL MY LIFE TURNING AROUND. SPARE ME THE GOOD KARMA SPEECH, OKAY? NO MATTER WHAT I DO I WILL ALWAYS LIVE IN A WORLD OF SHIT.
PILLS KICKING IN?
YOU BETCHA.

brinnng
BENSON. YOU BETTER HAVE GOOD NEWS FOR ME.
WE HAD A TAIL ON CAL MCDONALD...BUT THEY LOST HIM.
THAT'S NOT GOOD NEWS.
WE GOT HIM AGAIN, HEADING BACK ON THE 134 FROM GLENDALE.
STOP HIM, AND ARREST HIM. DO IT BY THE BOOKS, BUT I DOUBT THAT ANYONE WOULD MIND IF YOU WORKED HIM OVER A LITTLE.
YES, SIR.
JUST HAVE FUN AND TRY NOT TO KILL HIM. MCDONALD IS GOING TO JAIL AND THAT'S WHERE I WANT HIM TO GET THE BIG HURT.
The End

CELL BLOCK 666

story
STEVE NILES

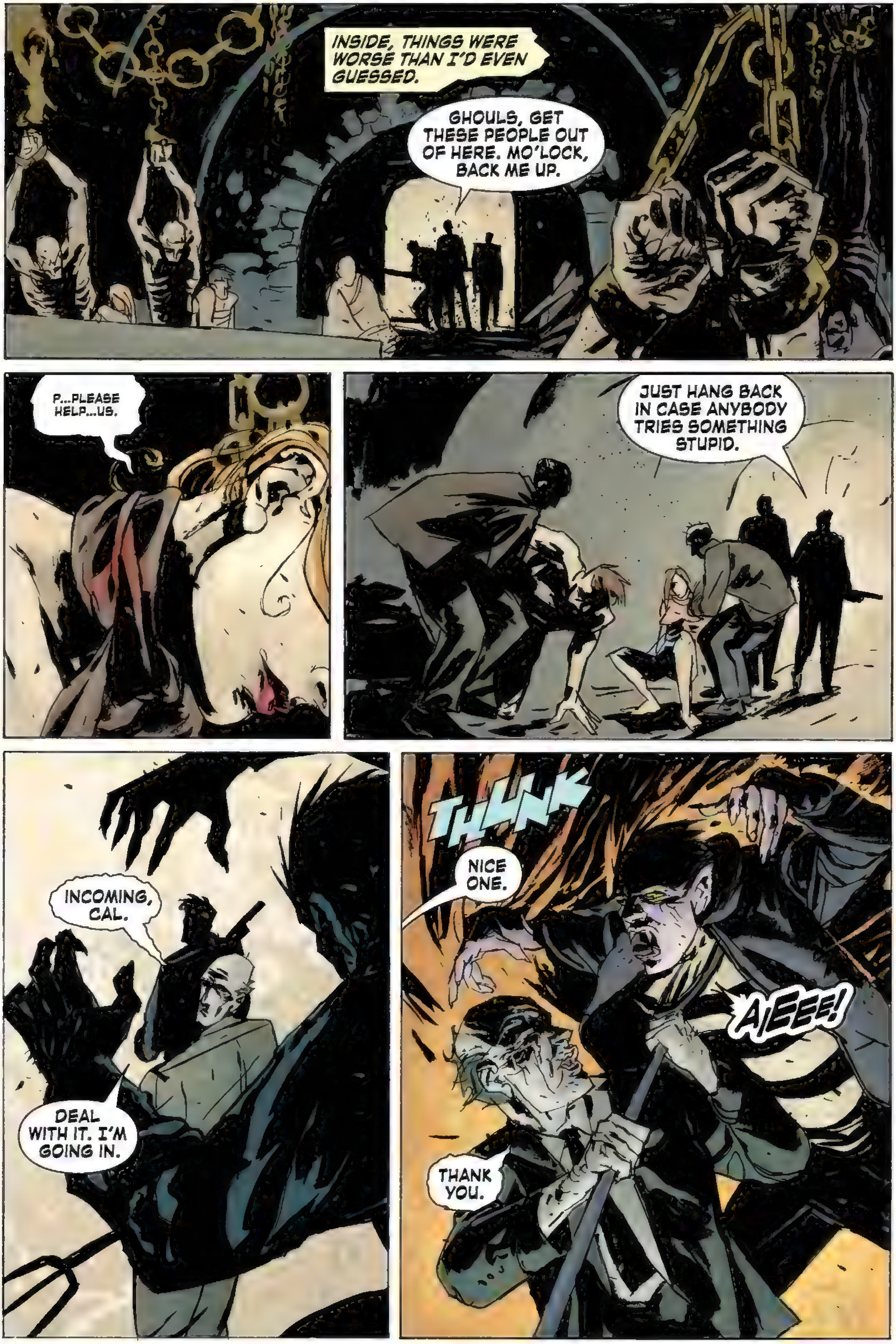
art
NICK STAKAL

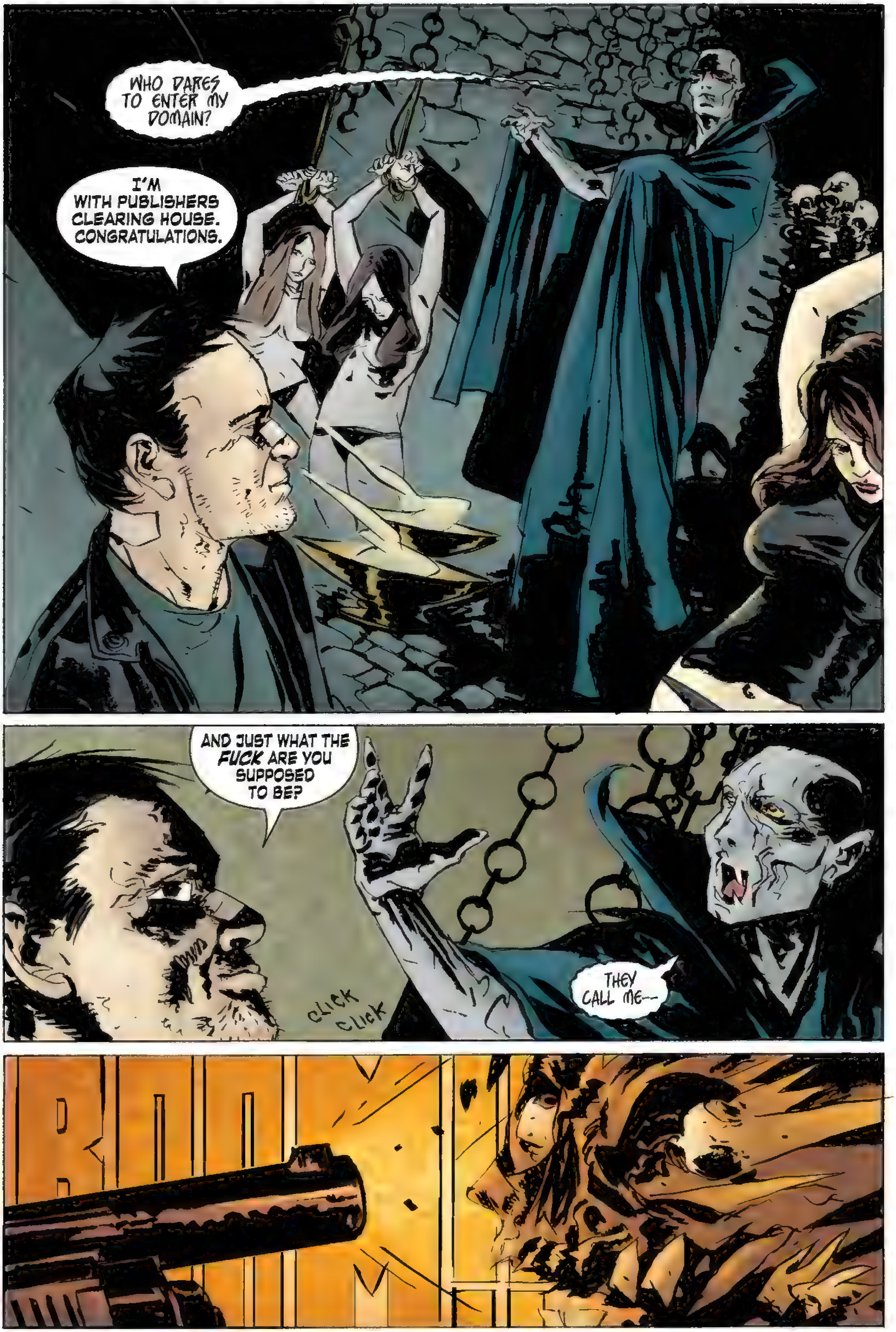
colors
MICHELLE MADSEN

letters
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®

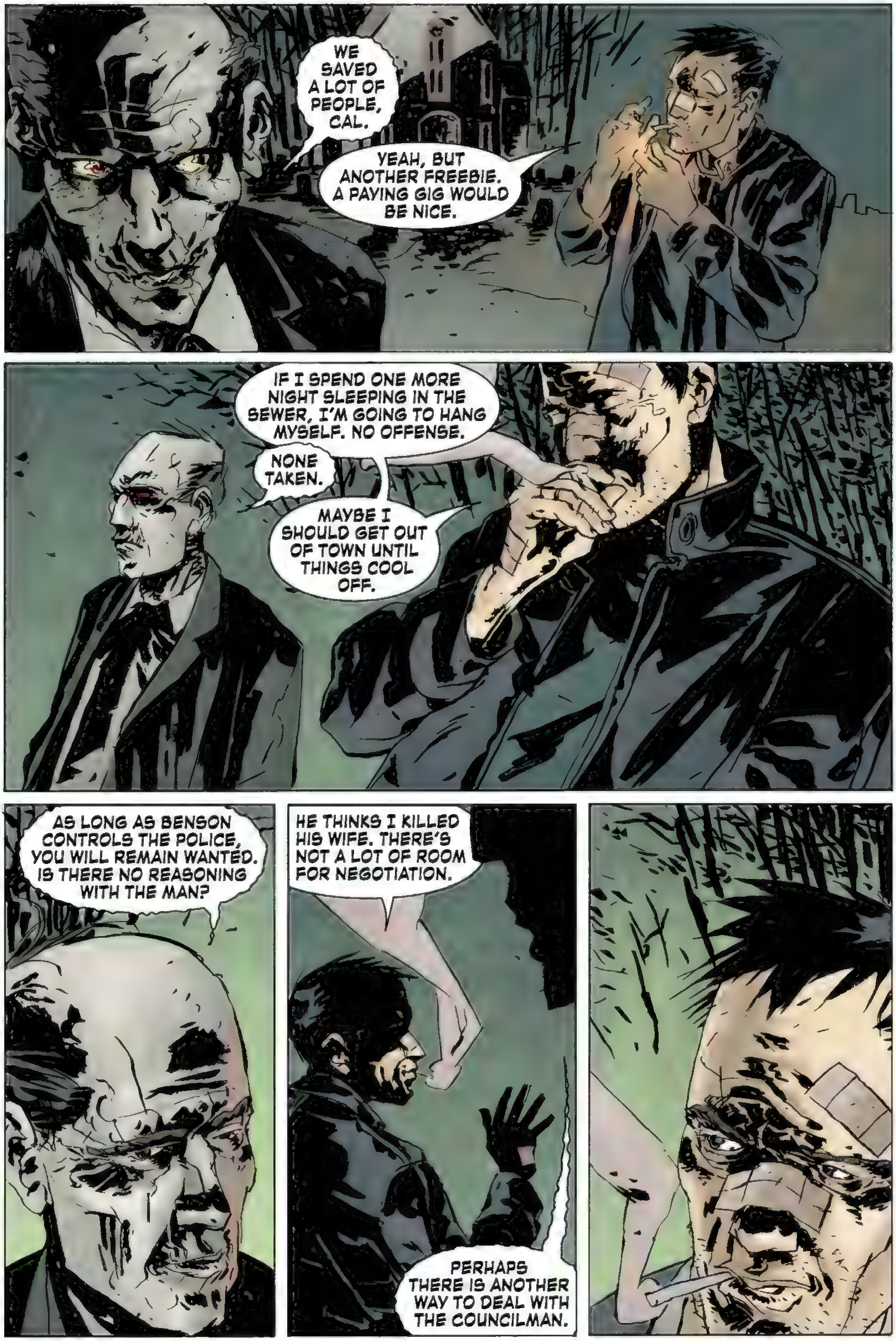
I'D BEEN IN HIDING SINCE THE L.A.P.D. DECIDED TO SLAP A BULL'S-EYE ON MY BACK THANKS TO COUNCILMAN BENSON.
HE THOUGHT IT WAS MY FAULT HIS WIFE DIED. I'D ARGUE THE POINT BUT PEOPLE WHO GET CLOSE TO ME TEND TO GET DEAD FAST.
SHALL WE KNOCK?
YOU'RE FUCKING HILARIOUS FOR A DEAD GUY.

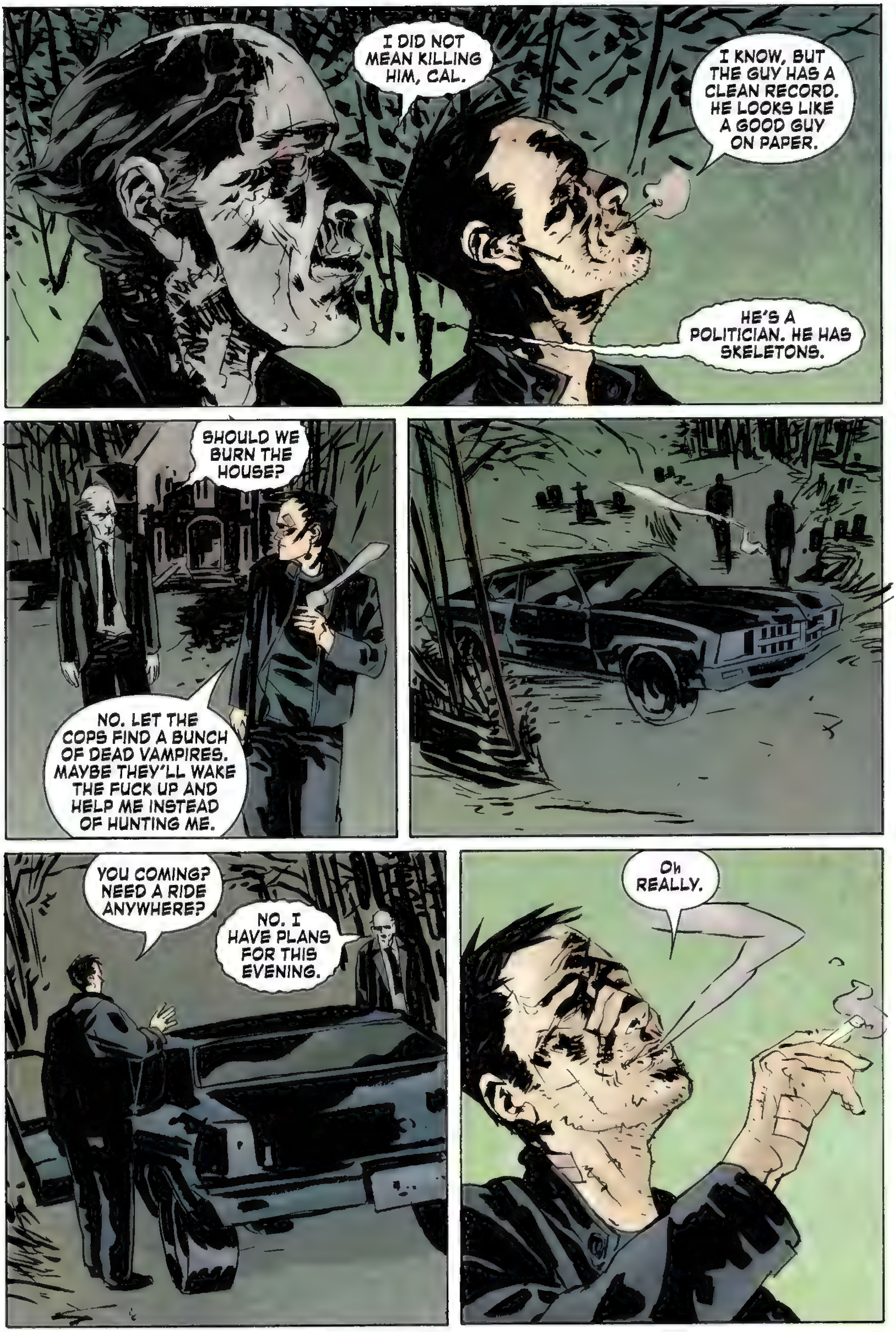
EVEN HOMELESS I MANAGED TO SCRAPE TOGETHER A COUPLE GIGS. USUALLY I BORROWED CASH FROM MO'LOCK, BUT THE GHOUL HAD GOTTEN IT INTO HIS HEAD THAT IF I DIDN'T HAVE MONEY, I WOULDN'T POP PILLS OR SMOKE WEED OR DRINK.
SILLY GHOUL. NOT EVEN BEING HOMELESS WILL STAND BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS ADDICTIONS.
ALL RIGHT, FREAKS, COME ON OUT AND TAKE YOUR MEDICINE. FUN TIME'S OVER!
WHAM!
WORD HAD COME TO ME ABOUT A CLUB IN NOHO THAT HAD BEEN GETTING HIT BY BLOODSUCKERS WHO LIKED TO DRAG OFF LITTLE POSER GOTH GIRLS AND DRAIN THEM OF BLOOD.
I'M GUESSING IT'S SOME PUNK-ASS VAMPIRE'S IDEA OF BEING FUNNY, PREYING ON PEOPLE BY POSING TO BE ONE OF THEM.
HOW FUCKING DROLL.
I WAS GONNA CRACK HIS FANGS WITH A HAMMER WHEN I FOUND HIM.


INSIDE, THINGS WERE WORSE THAN I'D EVEN GUESSED.
GHOULS, GET THESE PEOPLE OUT OF HERE. MO'LOCK, BACK ME UP.
P...PLEASE HELP...US.
JUST HANG BACK IN CASE ANYBODY TRIES SOMETHING STUPID.
INCOMING, CAL.
DEAL WITH IT. I'M GOING IN.
THUNK
NICE ONE.
AIEEE!
THANK YOU.


WHO DARES TO ENTER MY DOMAIN?
I'M WITH PUBLISHERS CLEARING HOUSE. CONGRATULATIONS.
AND JUST WHAT THE *FUCK* ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?
CLICK CLICK
THEY CALL ME--

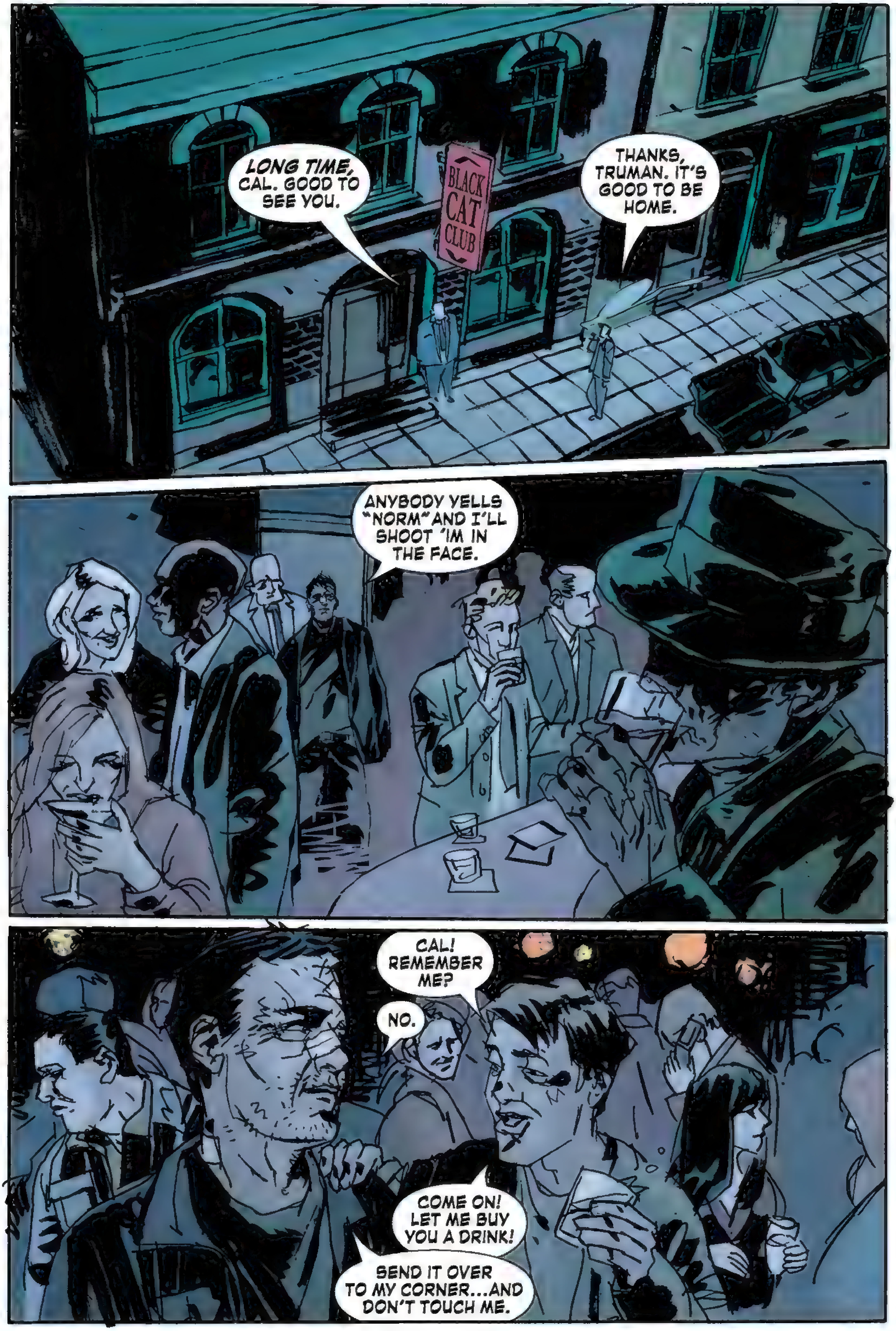
I DON'T REALLY CARE.
IT'S OKAY. YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
THUMP!
GET THE OTHERS?
THERE WERE THREE UPSTAIRS. THEY HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED.
NICE WORK, GUYS. THANKS FOR THE HELP.
YOU ARE WELCOME.
ANYTIME, CAL MCDONALD.

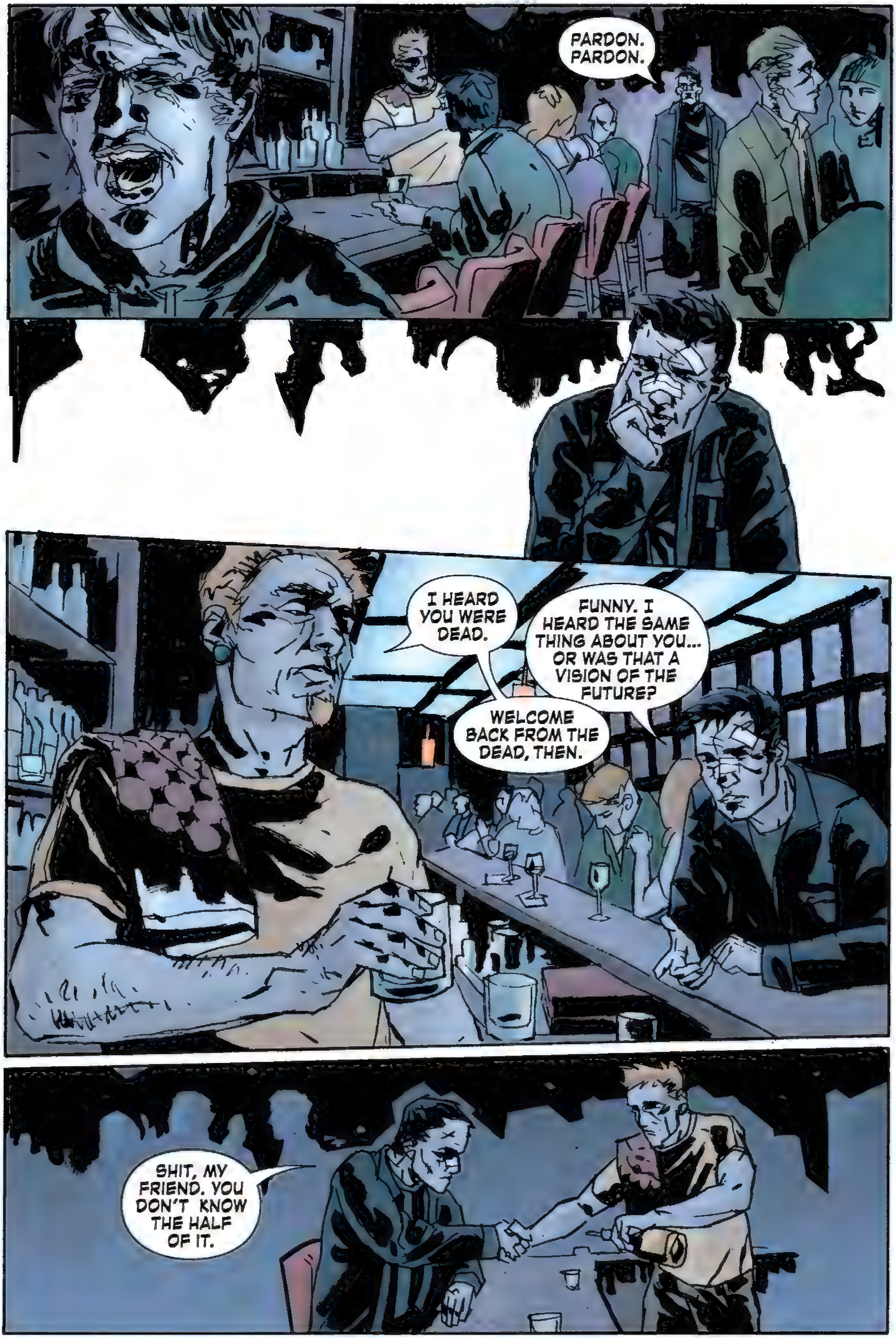

WE SAVED A LOT OF PEOPLE, CAL.
YEAH, BUT ANOTHER FREEBIE. A PAYING GIG WOULD BE NICE.
IF I SPEND ONE MORE NIGHT SLEEPING IN THE SEWER, I'M GOING TO HANG MYSELF. NO OFFENSE.
NONE TAKEN.
MAYBE I SHOULD GET OUT OF TOWN UNTIL THINGS COOL OFF.
AS LONG AS BENSON CONTROLS THE POLICE, YOU WILL REMAIN WANTED. IS THERE NO REASONING WITH THE MAN?
HE THINKS I KILLED HIS WIFE. THERE'S NOT A LOT OF ROOM FOR NEGOTIATION.
PERHAPS THERE IS ANOTHER WAY TO DEAL WITH THE COUNCILMAN.

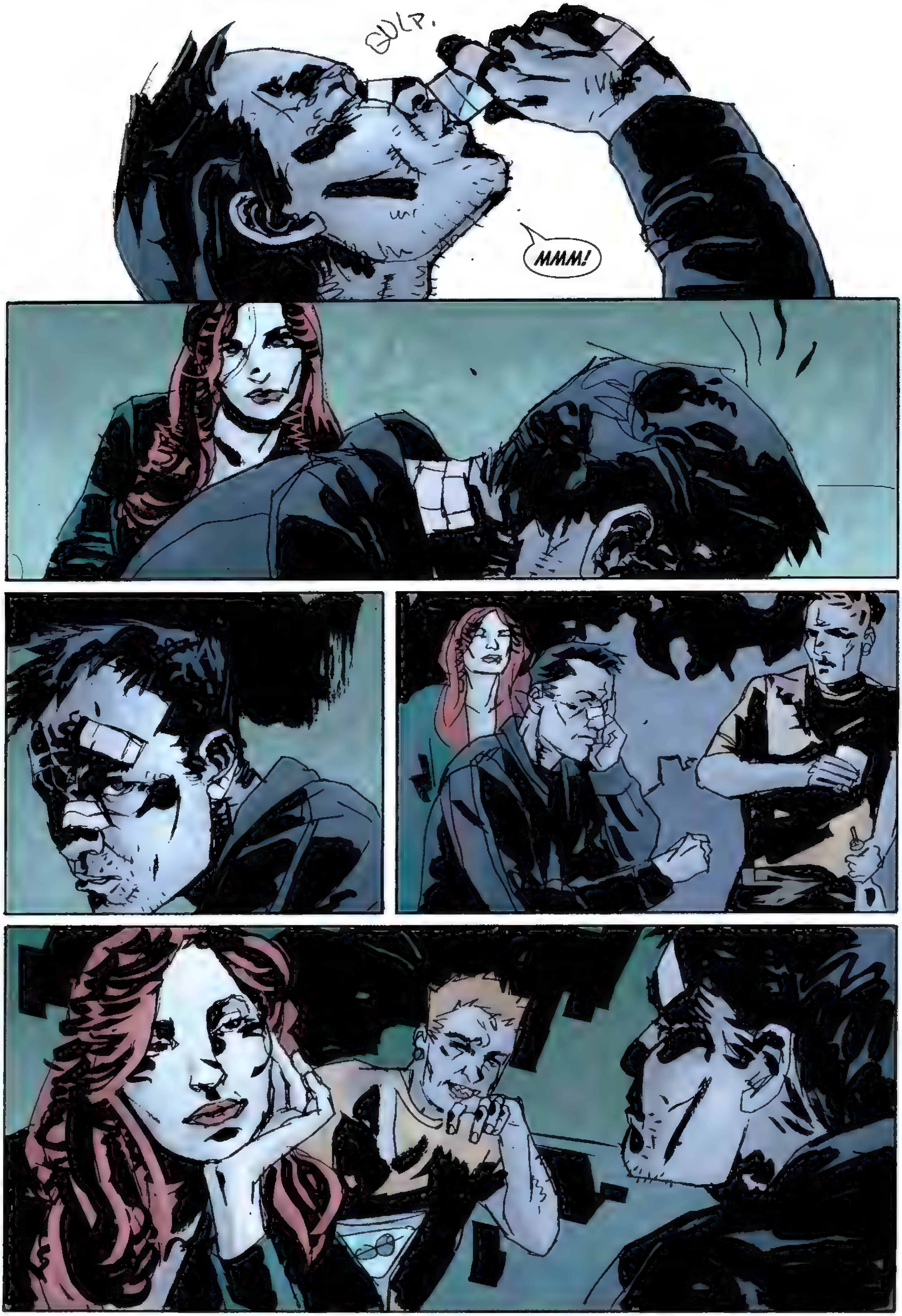

I DID NOT MEAN KILLING HIM, CAL.
I KNOW, BUT THE GUY HAS A CLEAN RECORD. HE LOOKS LIKE A GOOD GUY ON PAPER.
HE'S A POLITICIAN. HE HAS SKELETONS.
SHOULD WE BURN THE HOUSE?
NO. LET THE COPS FIND A BUNCH OF DEAD VAMPIRES. MAYBE THEY'LL WAKE THE FUCK UP AND HELP ME INSTEAD OF HUNTING ME.
YOU COMING? NEED A RIDE ANYWHERE?
NO. I HAVE PLANS FOR THIS EVENING.
Oh REALLY.

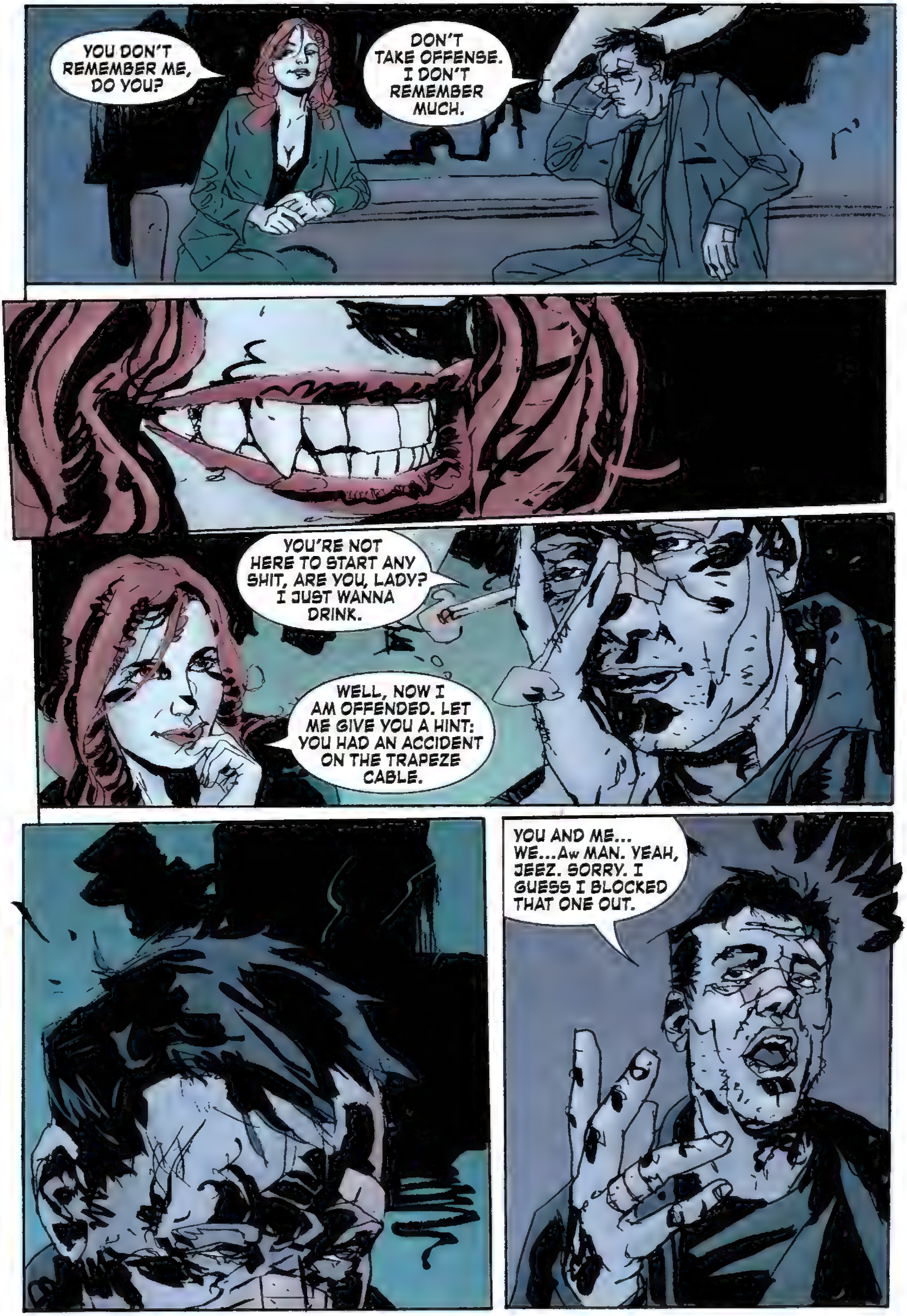
I TOLD SHAW'NA I'D HELP HER DIG UP AN OLD FRIEND TONIGHT.
OKAY. HAVE FUN WITH THAT. I'M GOING TO THE BLACK CAT.
ARE YOU SURE THAT'S WISE?
I'M SICK OF HIDING. I JUST WANT A FUCKIN' DRINK.
I BEG YOU, CAL. BE CAREFUL.
YOU'RE THE ONE GOING GRAVE-DIGGING. *YOU* BE CAREFUL. I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
WRRMM
SEE YA IN THE SEWERS!

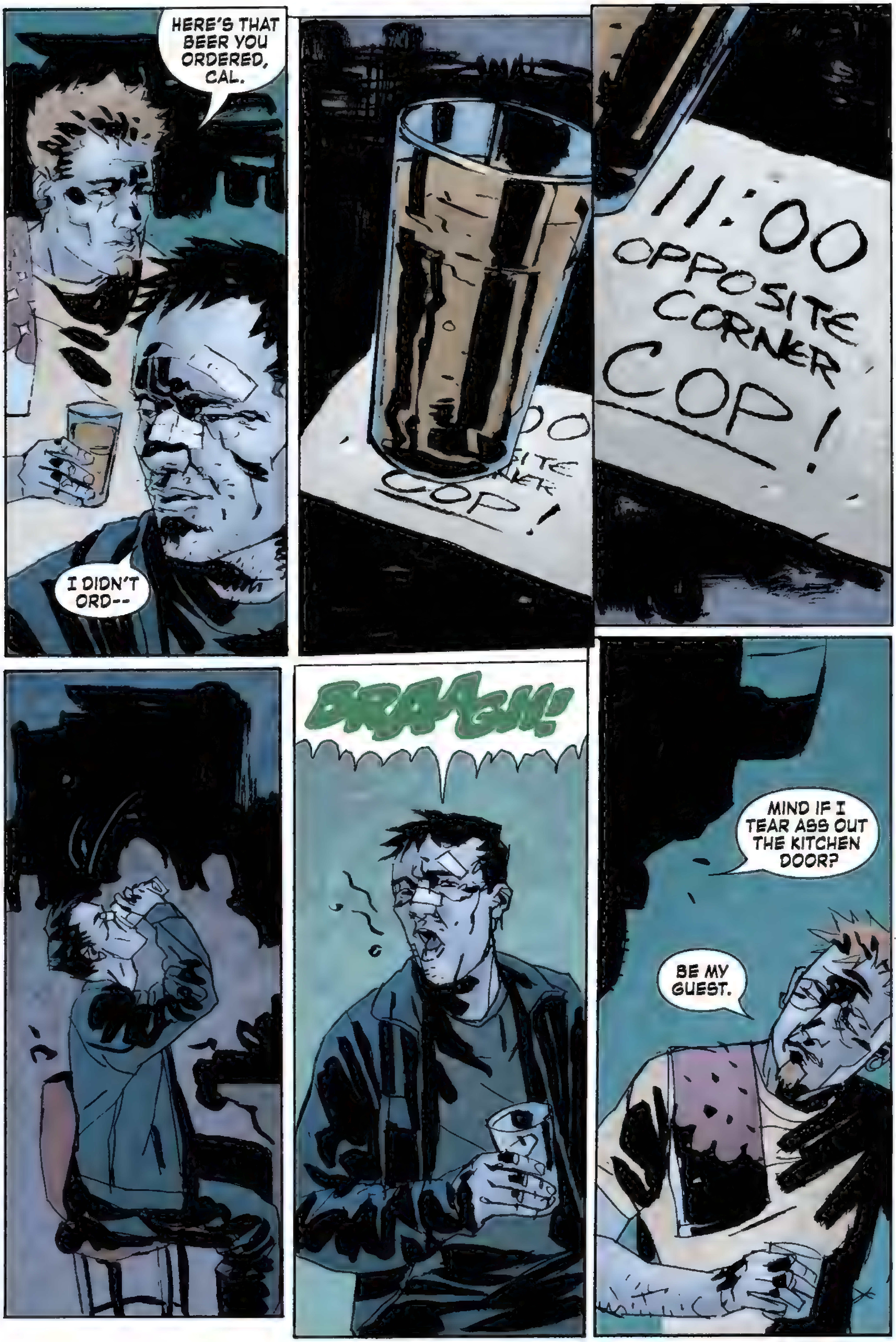
YOU ARE WORRIED?
YES. SOMETHING DOES NOT FEEL RIGHT.
YOU ARE NOT HIS KEEPER. HE IS MORE THAN CAPABLE OF DEFENDING HIMSELF. GHOULS FROM ALL OVER FLOCK HERE KNOWING HE WATCHES OVER THEM.
THEN WHO WATCHES OVER HIM?


LONG TIME, CAL. GOOD TO SEE YOU.
BLACK CAT CLUB
THANKS, TRUMAN. IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME.
ANYBODY YELLS "NORM" AND I'LL SHOOT 'IM IN THE FACE.
CAL! REMEMBER ME?
NO.
COME ON! LET ME BUY YOU A DRINK!
SEND IT OVER TO MY CORNER...AND DON'T TOUCH ME.

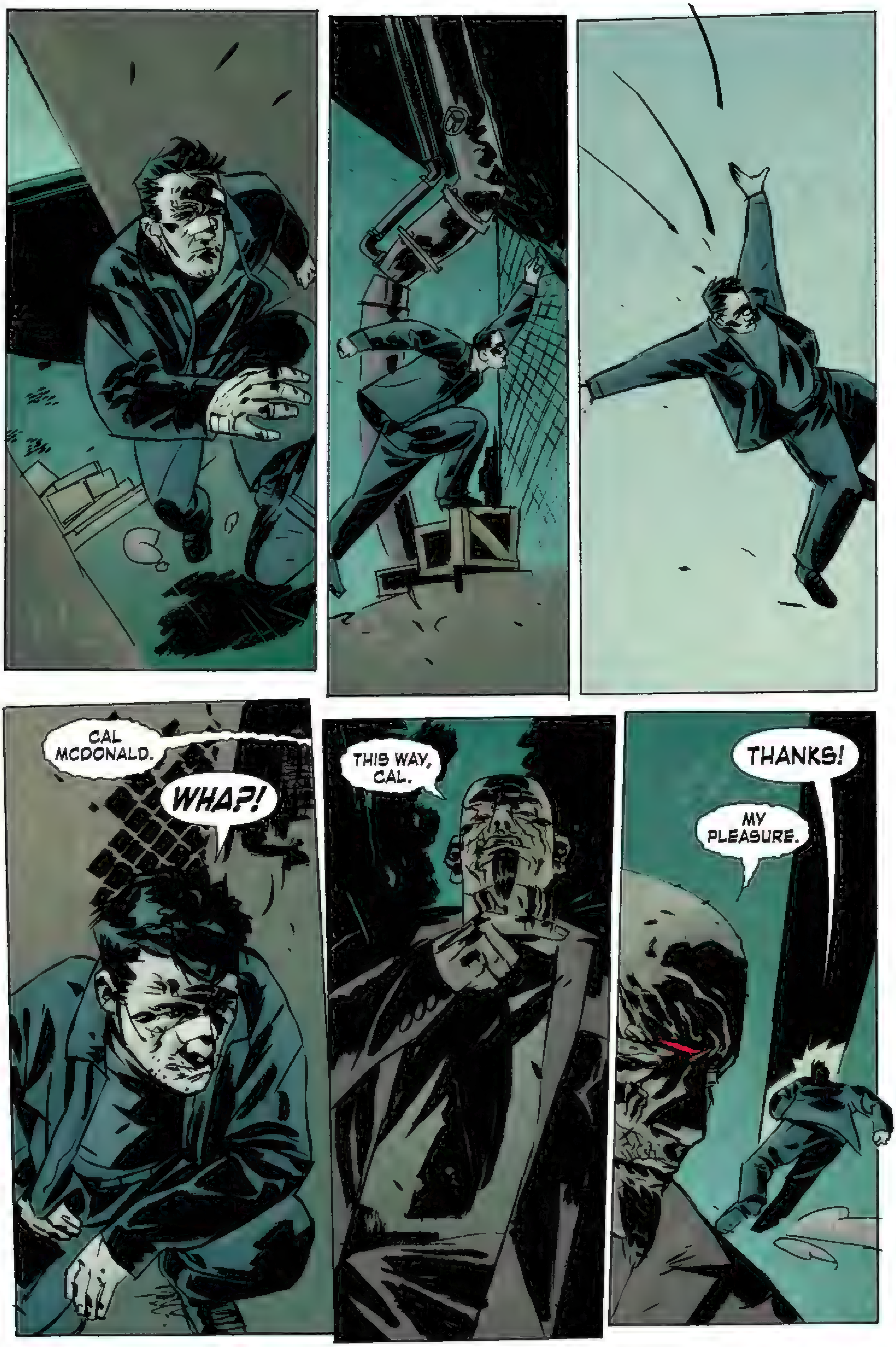

PARDON. PARDON.
I HEARD YOU WERE DEAD.
FUNNY. I HEARD THE SAME THING ABOUT YOU... OR WAS THAT A VISION OF THE FUTURE?
WELCOME BACK FROM THE DEAD, THEN.
SHIT, MY FRIEND. YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT.


GULP.
MMM!

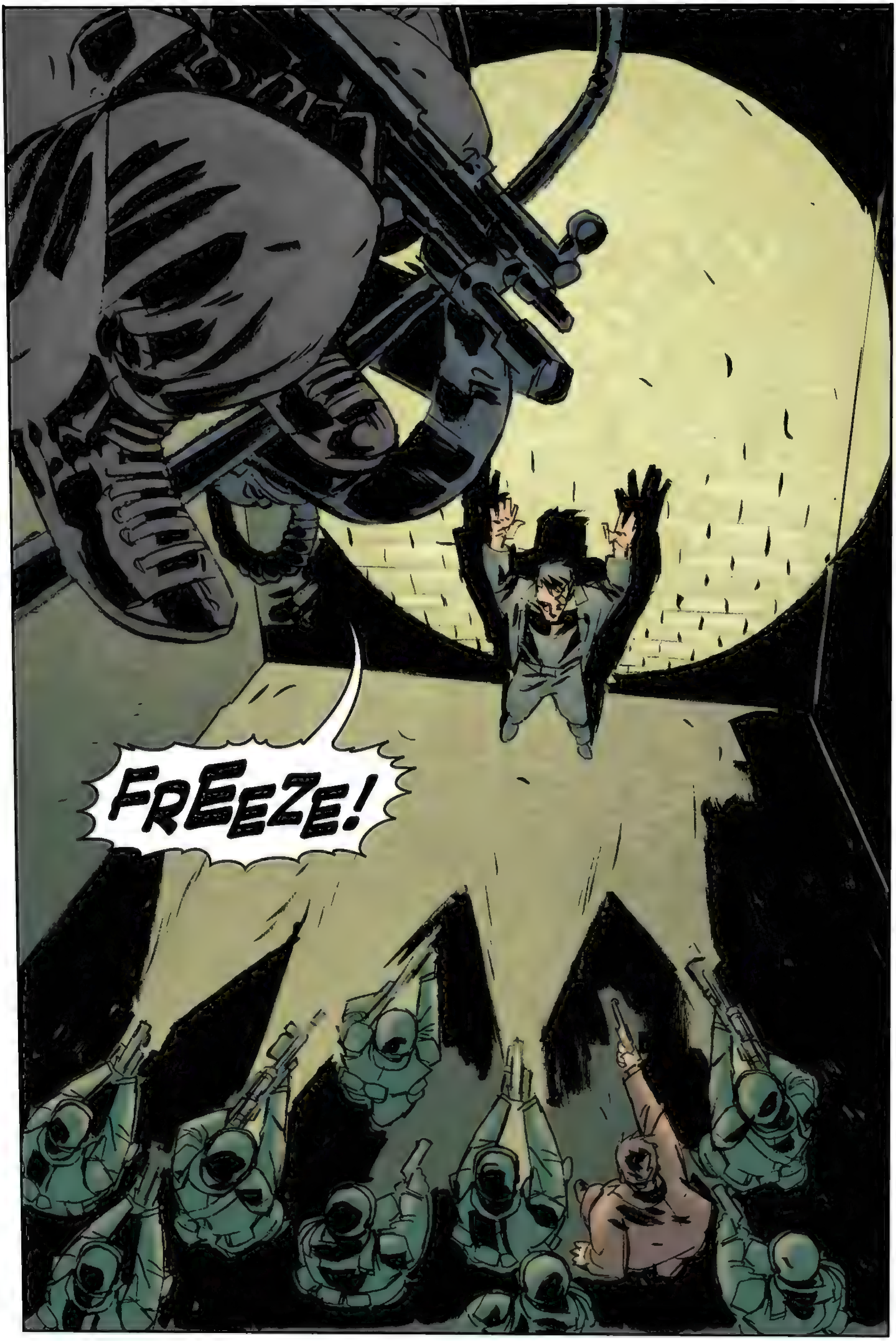

YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME, DO YOU?
DON'T TAKE OFFENSE. I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH.
YOU'RE NOT HERE TO START ANY SHIT, ARE YOU, LADY? I JUST WANNA DRINK.
WELL, NOW I AM OFFENDED. LET ME GIVE YOU A HINT: YOU HAD AN ACCIDENT ON THE TRAPEZE CABLE.
YOU AND ME... WE...Aw MAN. YEAH, JEEZ. SORRY. I GUESS I BLOCKED THAT ONE OUT.


HERE'S THAT BEER YOU ORDERED, CAL.
I DIDN'T ORD--
11:00 OPPOSITE CORNER COP!
11:00 OPPOSITE CORNER COP!
BRAAGM!
MIND IF I TEAR ASS OUT THE KITCHEN DOOR?
BE MY GUEST.

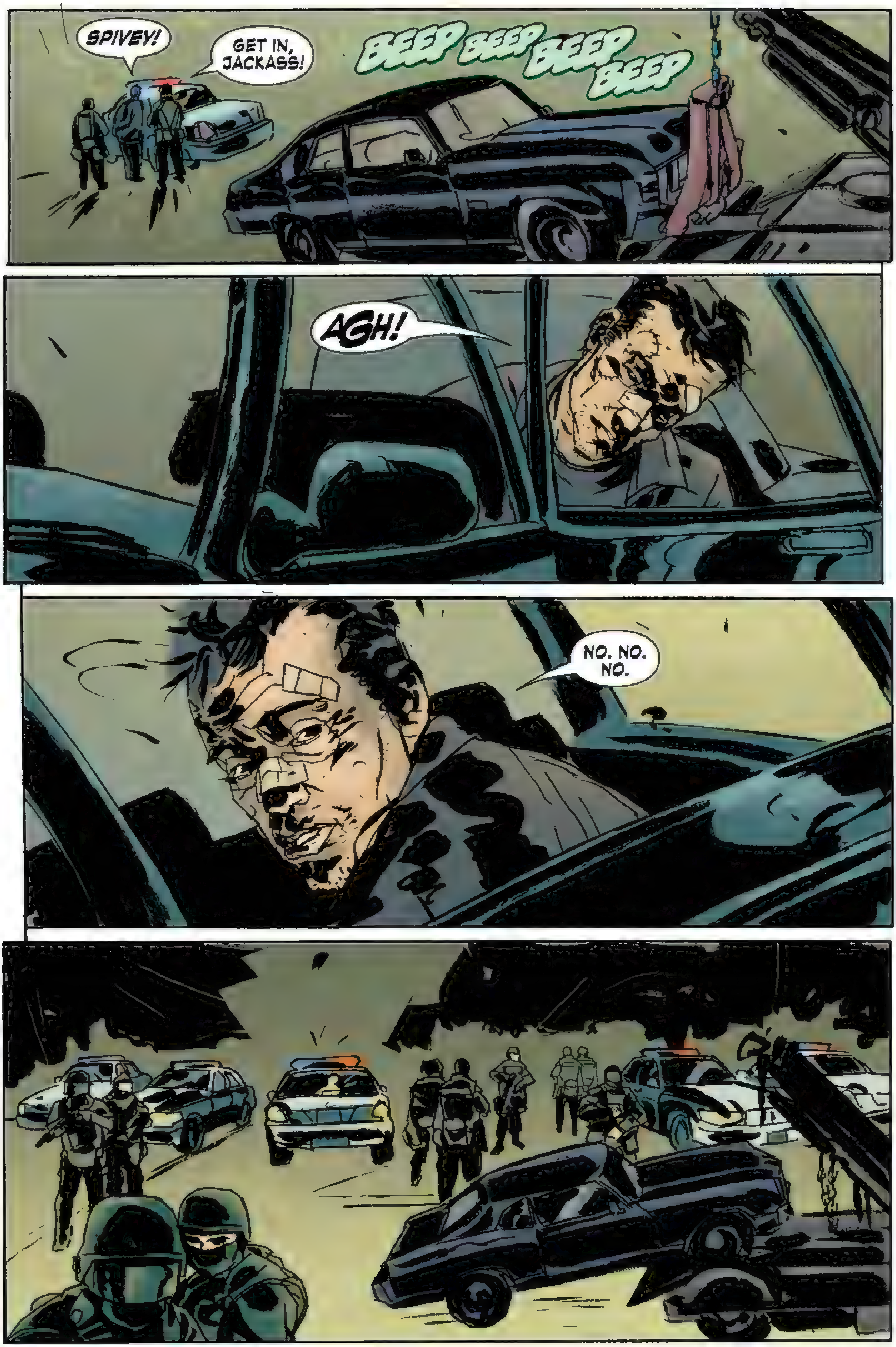
BAM
THERE HE IS!
SUSPECT SPOTTED!
POLICE! FREEZE!

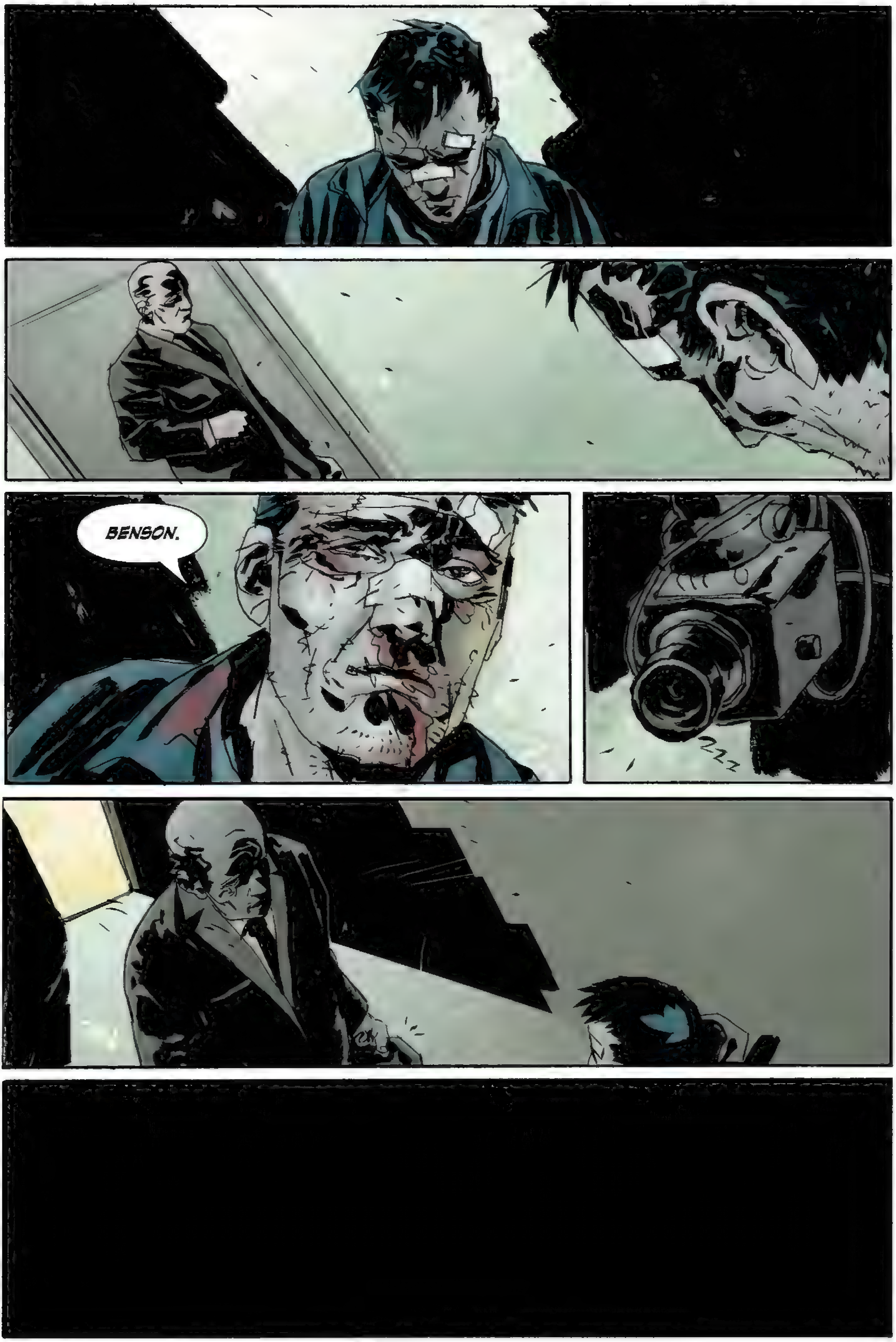

CAL MCDONALD.
WHA?!
THIS WAY, CAL.
THANKS!
MY PLEASURE.

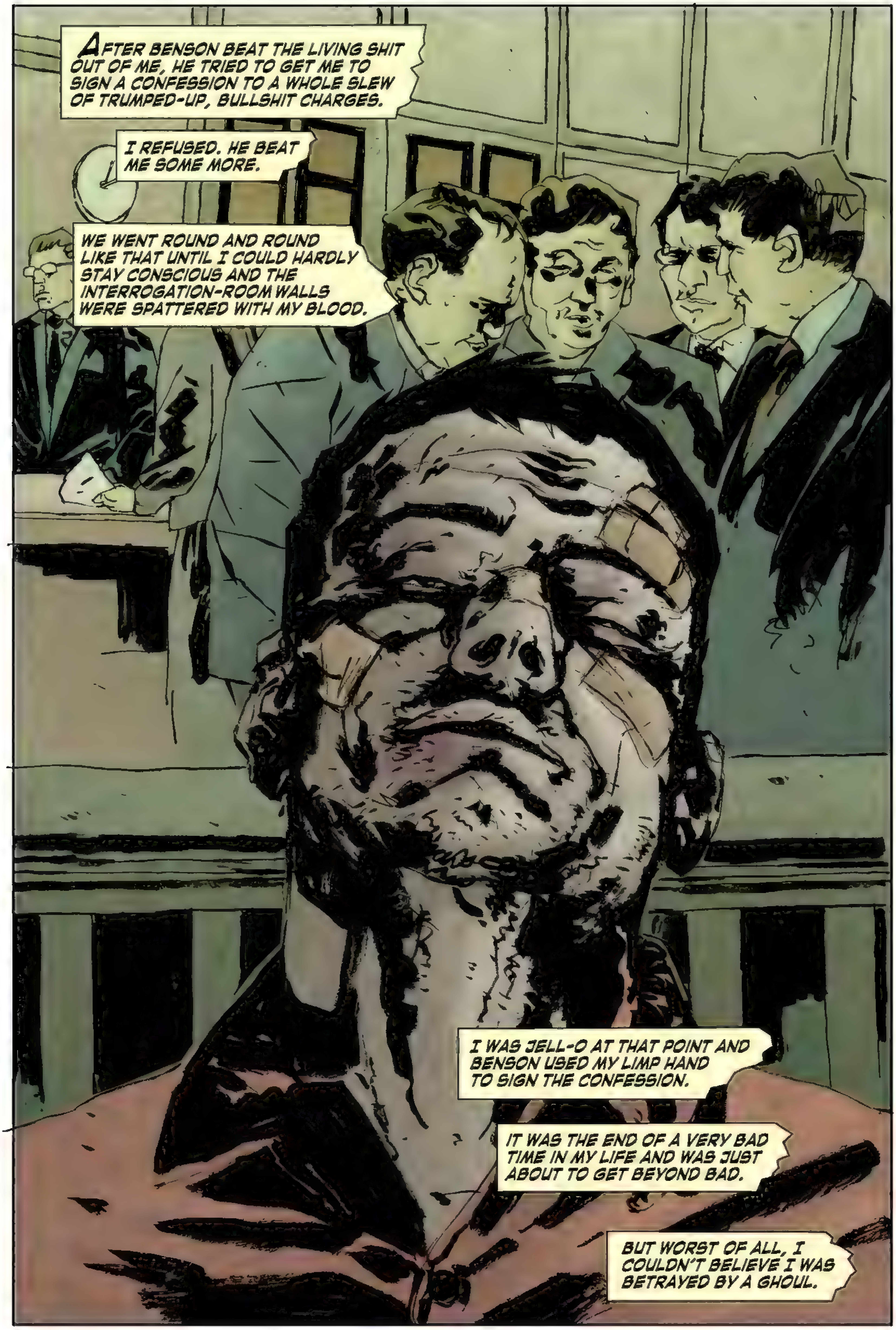
WHERE THE FUCK DID THAT GHOUL SEND ME?
CAL MCDONALD! THIS IS THE LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT! WE HAVE YOU SURROUNDED.

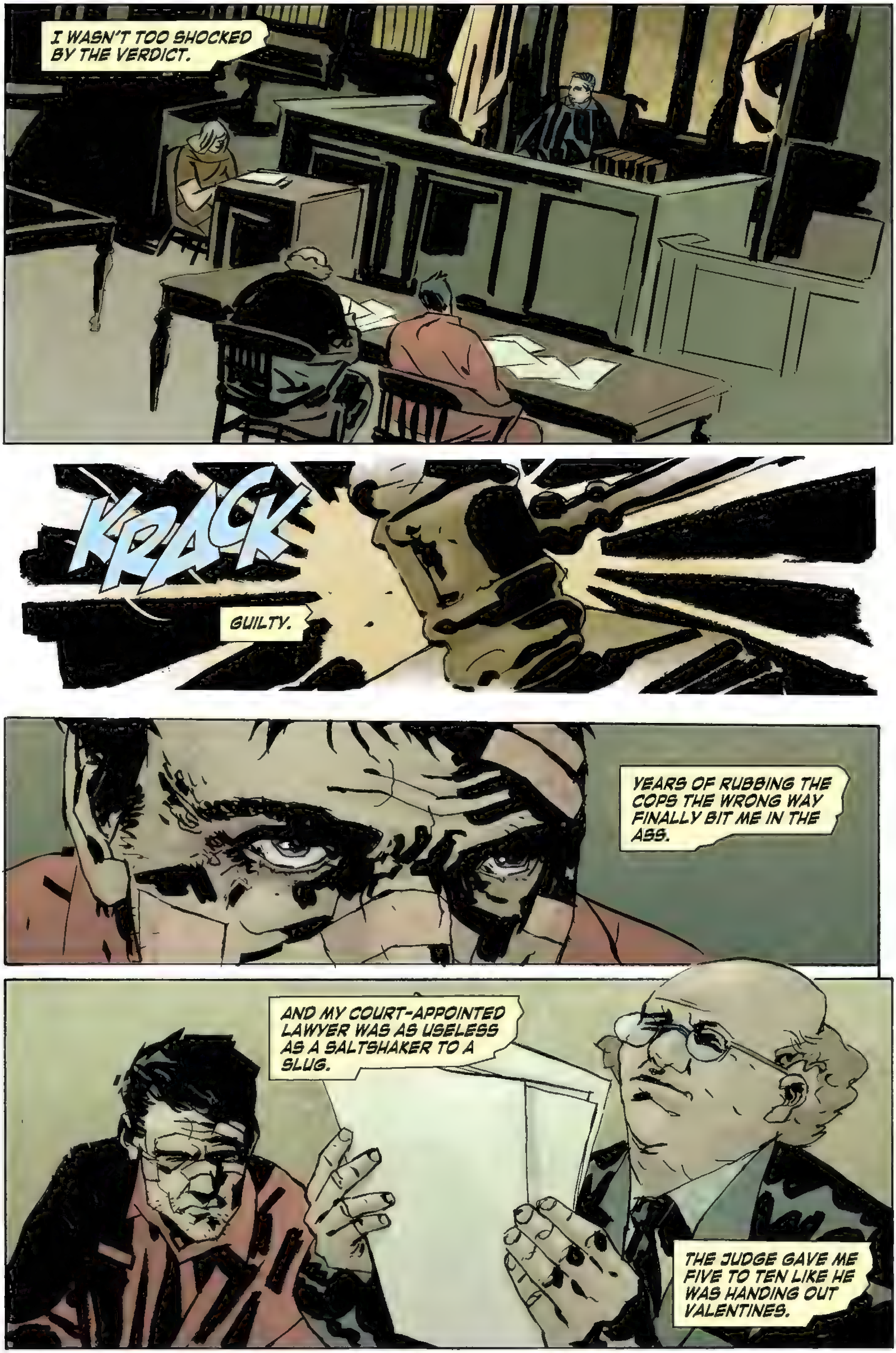

FREEZE!

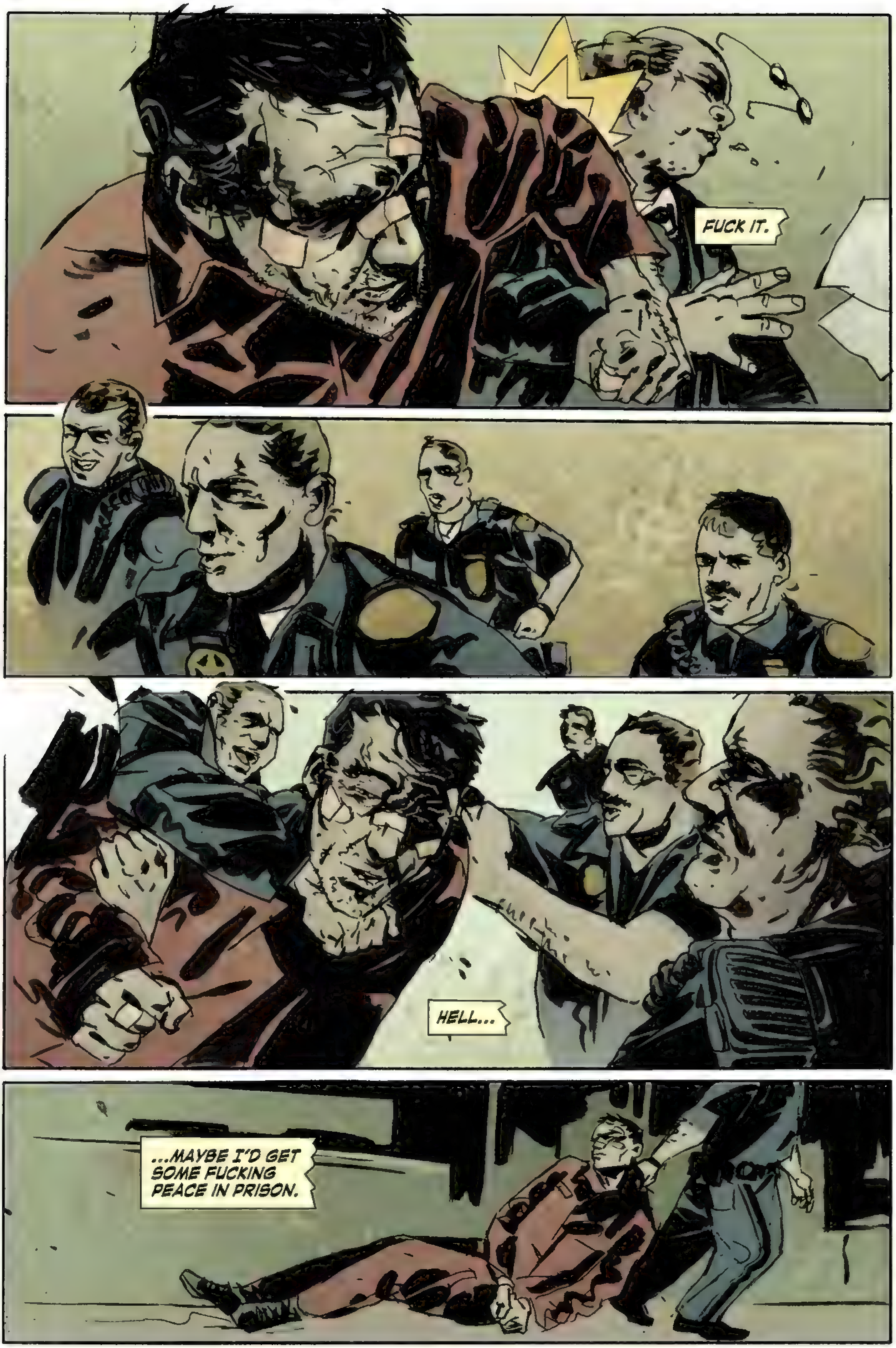
GET ON THE GROUND! GET ON THE GROUND!
I'M WANTED, NOT DEAF.
THOK
GOT ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY, SMART GUY?
I'M JUST WONDERING HOW SMALL YOUR DICK IS TO MAKE YOU ACT LIKE SUCH A COLOSSAL TOOL.
YOU ARE UNDER ARREST. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT. ANYTHING YOU SAY CAN AND WILL BE USED AGAINST YOU IN A COURT OF LAW...
IS THAT STARTING NOW, OR DOES WHAT I SAID ABOUT YOUR DICK GET TO COURT TOO?
KRAK

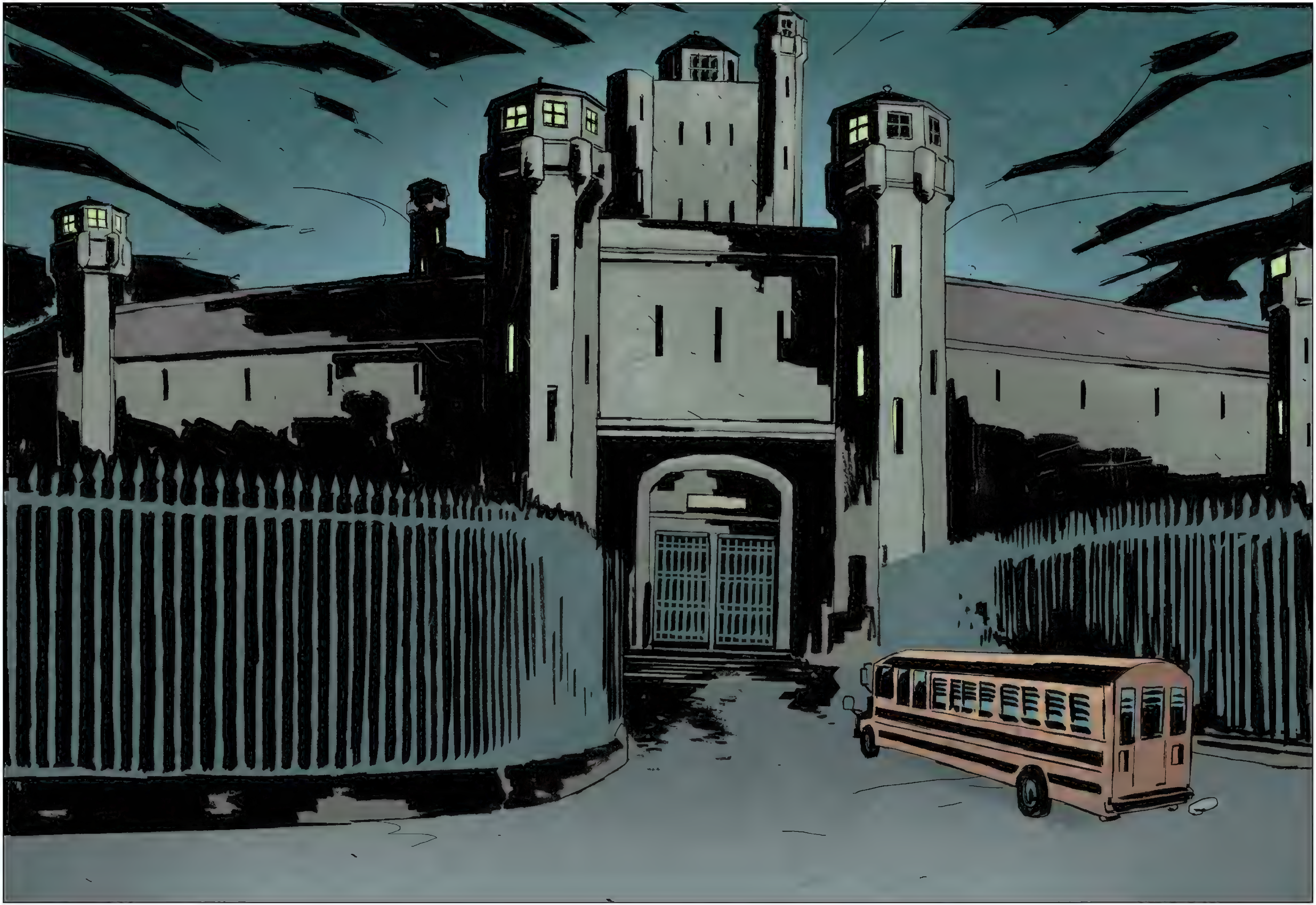

SPIVEY!
GET IN, JACKASS!
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
AGH!
NO. NO. NO.

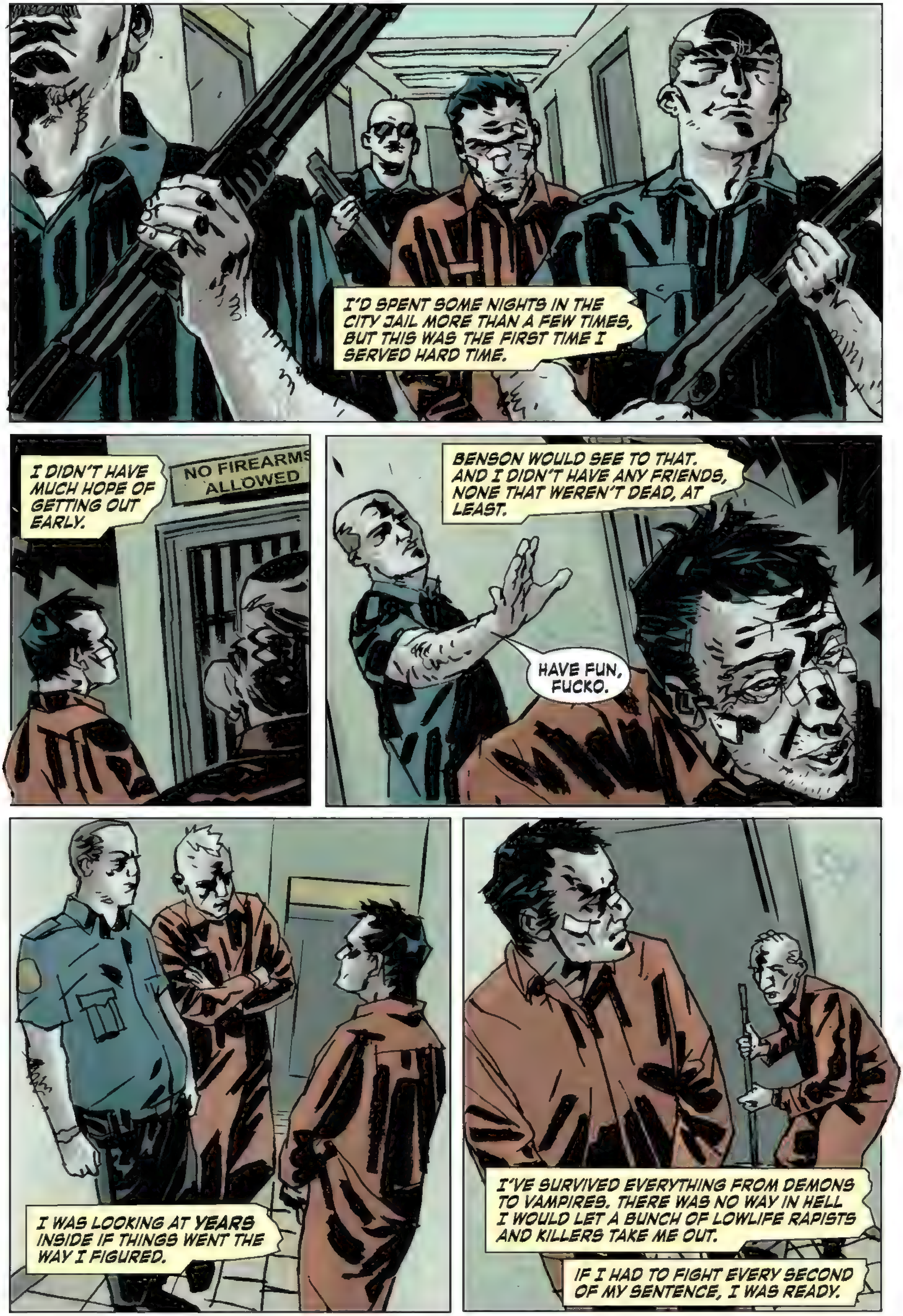

BENSON.
ZZZ


AFTER BENSON BEAT THE LIVING SHIT OUT OF ME, HE TRIED TO GET ME TO SIGN A CONFESSION TO A WHOLE SLEW OF TRUMPED-UP, BULLSHIT CHARGES.
I REFUSED. HE BEAT ME SOME MORE.
WE WENT ROUND AND ROUND LIKE THAT UNTIL I COULD HARDLY STAY CONSCIOUS AND THE INTERROGATION-ROOM WALLS WERE SPATTERED WITH MY BLOOD.
I WAS JELL-O AT THAT POINT AND BENSON USED MY LIMP HAND TO SIGN THE CONFESSION.
IT WAS THE END OF A VERY BAD TIME IN MY LIFE AND WAS JUST ABOUT TO GET BEYOND BAD.
BUT WORST OF ALL, I COULDN'T BELIEVE I WAS BETRAYED BY A GHOUL.

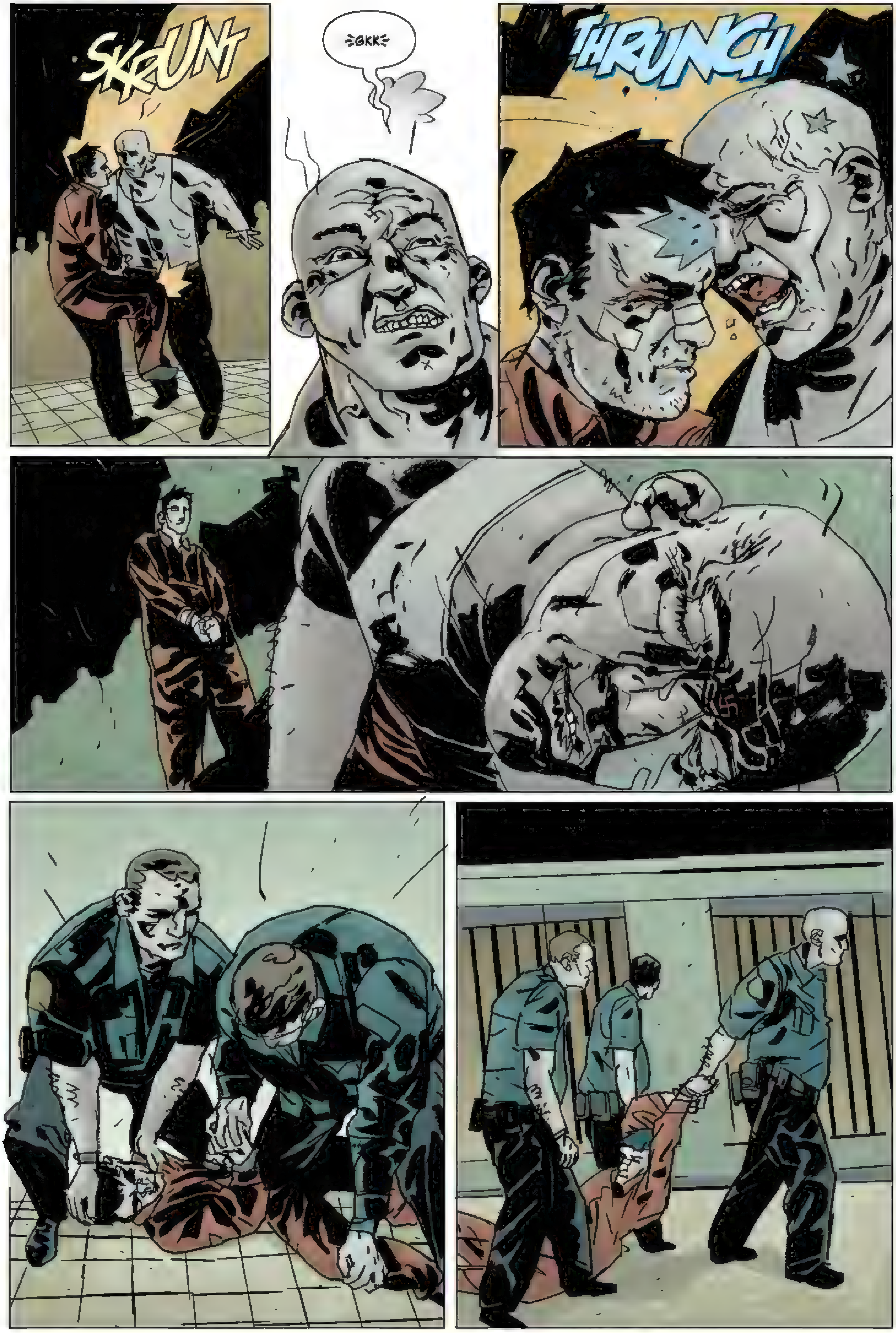

I WASN'T TOO SHOCKED BY THE VERDICT.
KRACK
GUILTY.
YEARS OF RUBBING THE COPS THE WRONG WAY FINALLY BIT ME IN THE ASS.
AND MY COURT-APPOINTED LAWYER WAS AS USELESS AS A SALTSHAKER TO A SLUG.
THE JUDGE GAVE ME FIVE TO TEN LIKE HE WAS HANDING OUT VALENTINES.

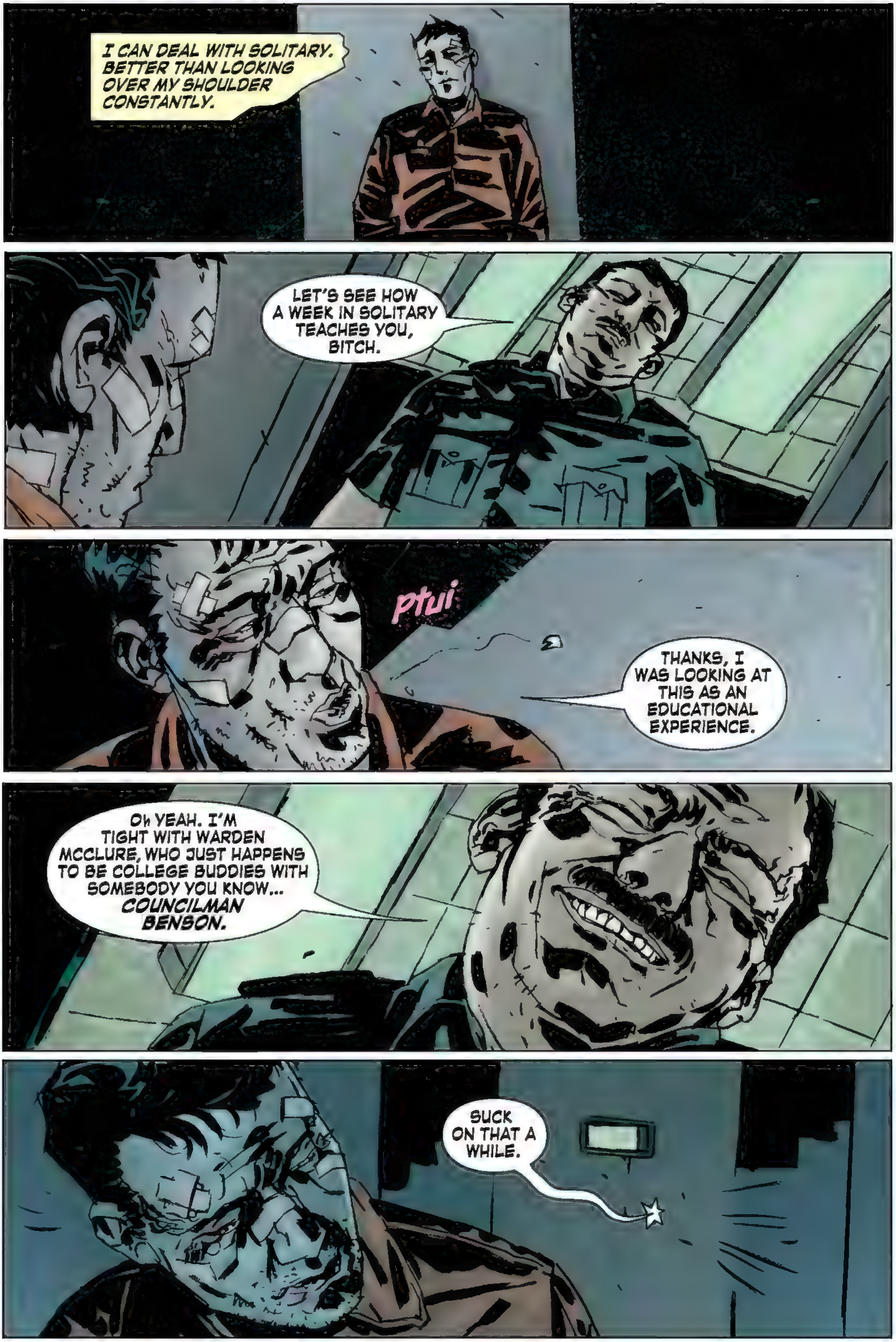

FUCK IT.
HELL...
...MAYBE I'D GET SOME FUCKING PEACE IN PRISON.

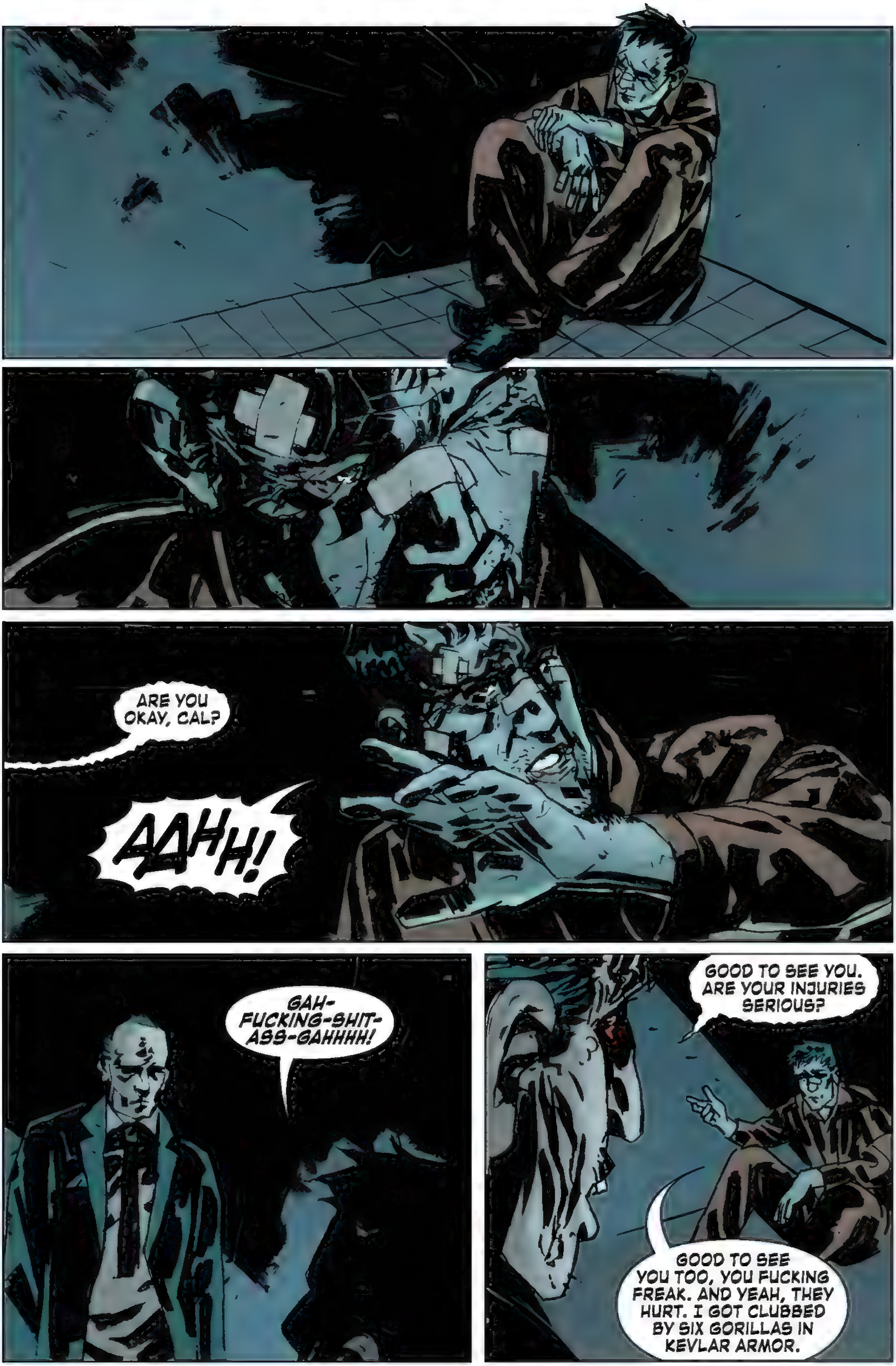


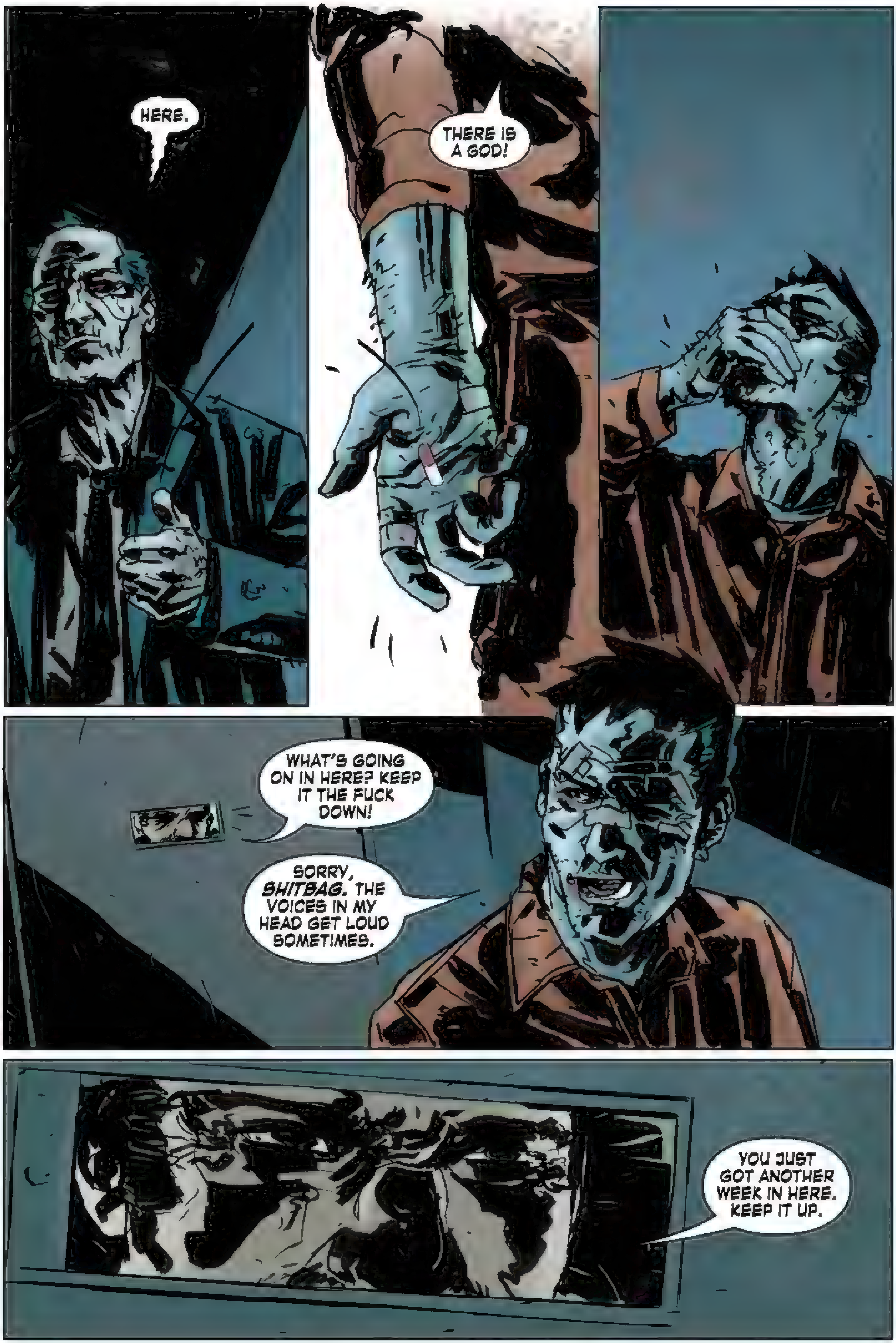

I'D SPENT SOME NIGHTS IN THE CITY JAIL MORE THAN A FEW TIMES, BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I SERVED HARD TIME.
I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH HOPE OF GETTING OUT EARLY.
NO FIREARMS ALLOWED
BENSON WOULD SEE TO THAT. AND I DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS, NONE THAT WEREN'T DEAD, AT LEAST.
HAVE FUN, FUCKO.
I WAS LOOKING AT YEARS INSIDE IF THINGS WENT THE WAY I FIGURED.
I'VE SURVIVED EVERYTHING FROM DEMONS TO VAMPIRES. THERE WAS NO WAY IN HELL I WOULD LET A BUNCH OF LOWLIFE RAPISTS AND KILLERS TAKE ME OUT.
IF I HAD TO FIGHT EVERY SECOND OF MY SENTENCE, I WAS READY.

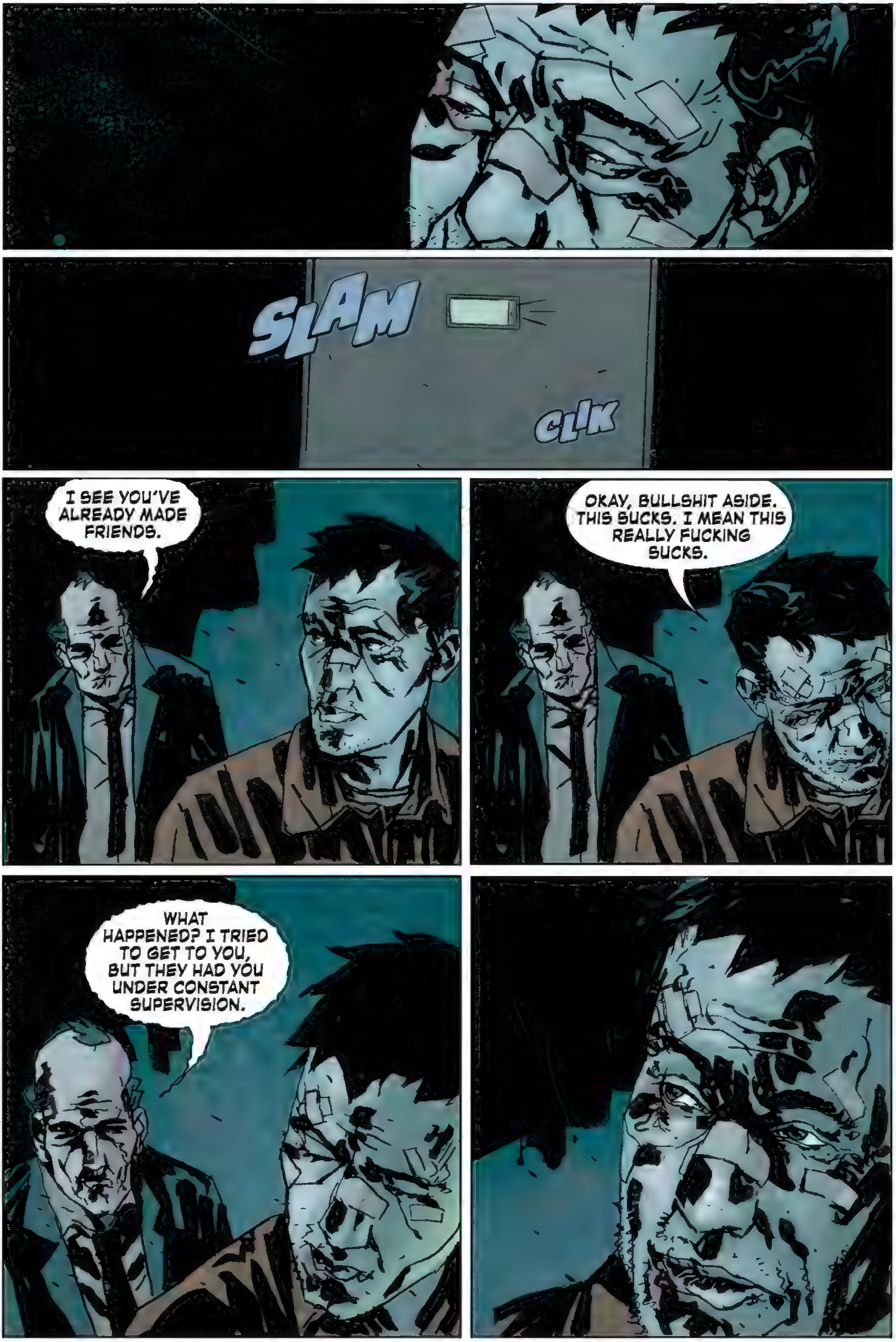
I CERTAINLY WOULDN'T HAVE ANY OF MY USUAL ALLIES. GHOULS CAN BLEND INTO A LOT OF PLACES, BUT PRISON IS NOT ONE OF THEM. THERE'S TOO MUCH SCRUTINY FOR THE LIVING DEAD.
LIKE IT OR NOT, I WAS GOING AT IT ALONE.
STAY BACK, DARREN. EVERYBODY STAY BACK, OR WE'LL CLEAR THE FLOOR.
I JUST WANT TO SEE WHAT A REAL-LIFE, EX-*COP*, ***BULLSHIT*** GHOST HUNTER LOOKS LIKE.
SO I DECIDED TO PISS AND MARK MY TERRITORY RIGHT AWAY.

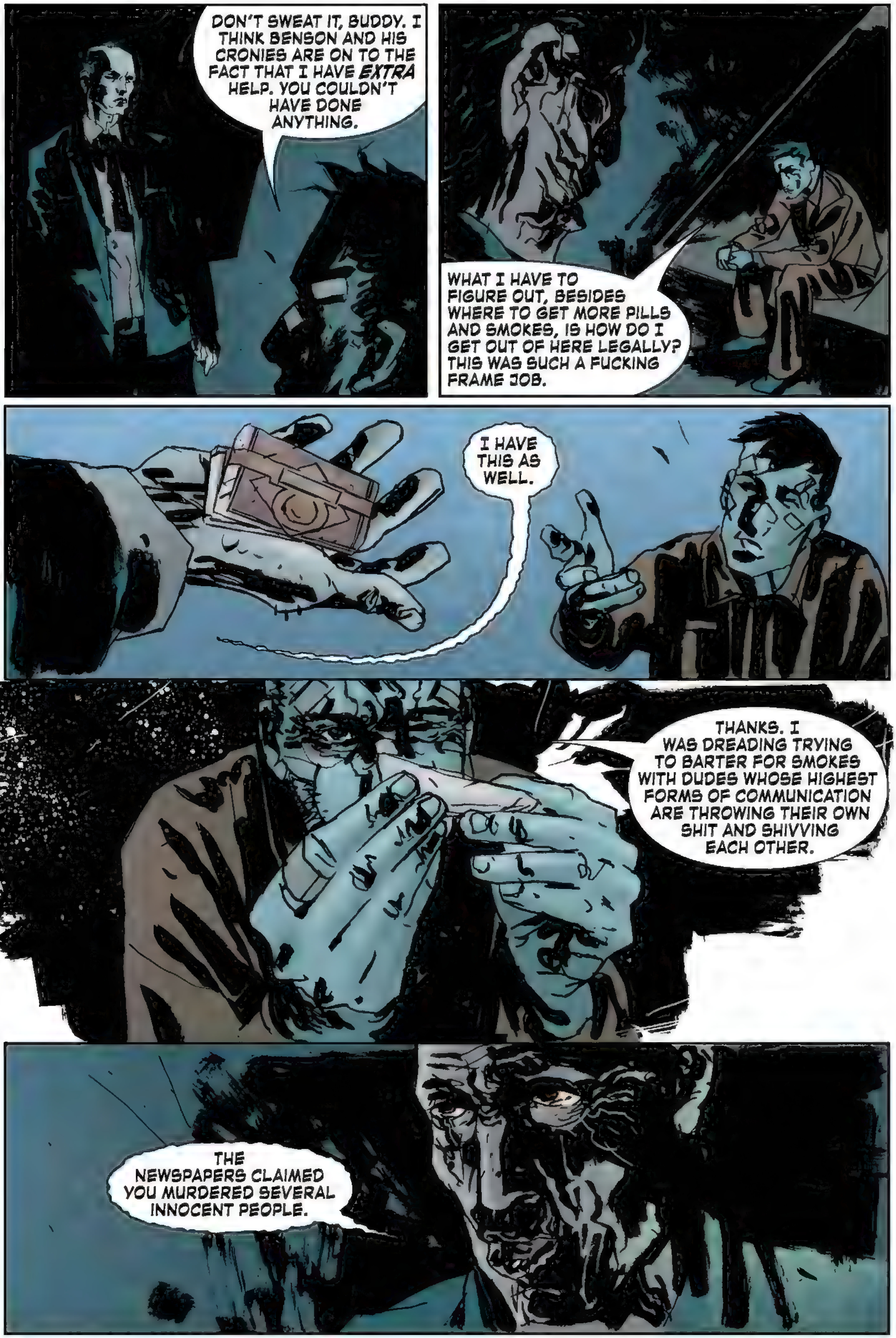

SKRUNT
GKK
THRUNCH

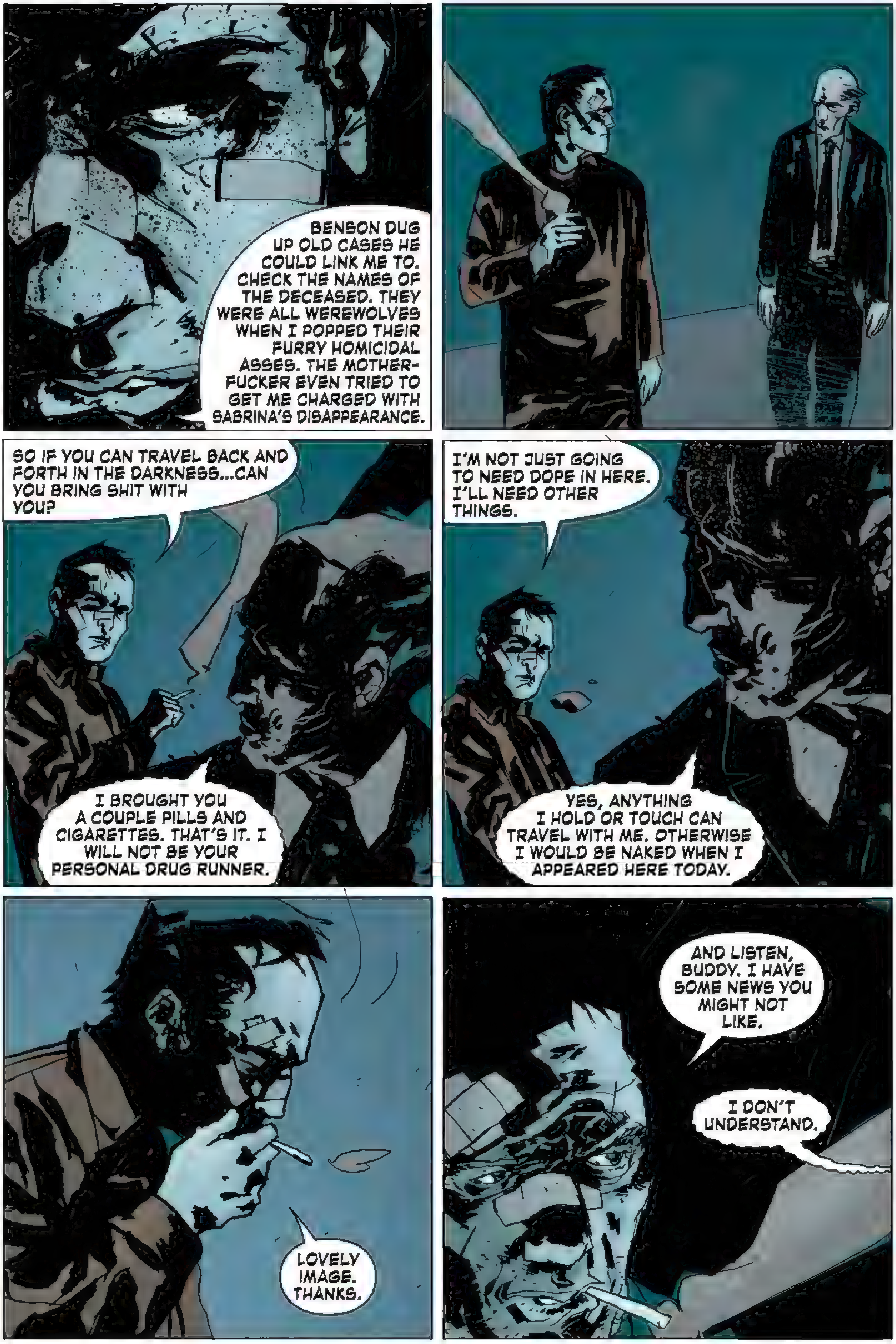

I CAN DEAL WITH SOLITARY. BETTER THAN LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER CONSTANTLY.
LET'S SEE HOW A WEEK IN SOLITARY TEACHES YOU, BITCH.
ptui
THANKS, I WAS LOOKING AT THIS AS AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE.
Oh YEAH. I'M TIGHT WITH WARDEN McCLURE, WHO JUST HAPPENS TO BE COLLEGE BUDDIES WITH SOMEBODY YOU KNOW... COUNCILMAN BENSON.
SUCK ON THAT A WHILE.

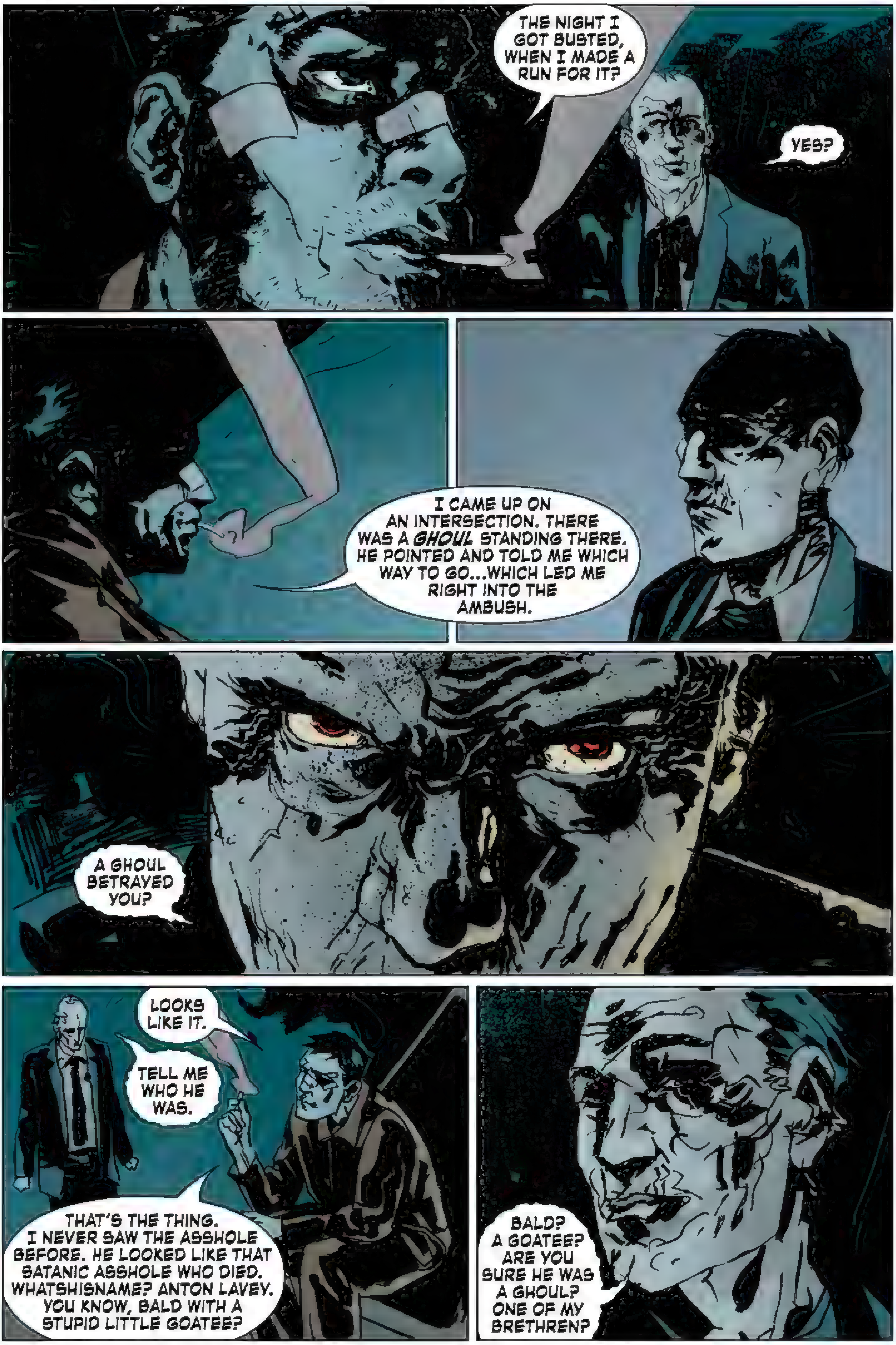

ARE YOU OKAY, CAL?
AAHH!
GAH-FUCKING-SHIT-ASS-GAHHHH!
GOOD TO SEE YOU. ARE YOUR INJURIES SERIOUS?
GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO, YOU FUCKING FREAK. AND YEAH, THEY HURT. I GOT CLUBBED BY SIX GORILLAS IN KEVLAR ARMOR.

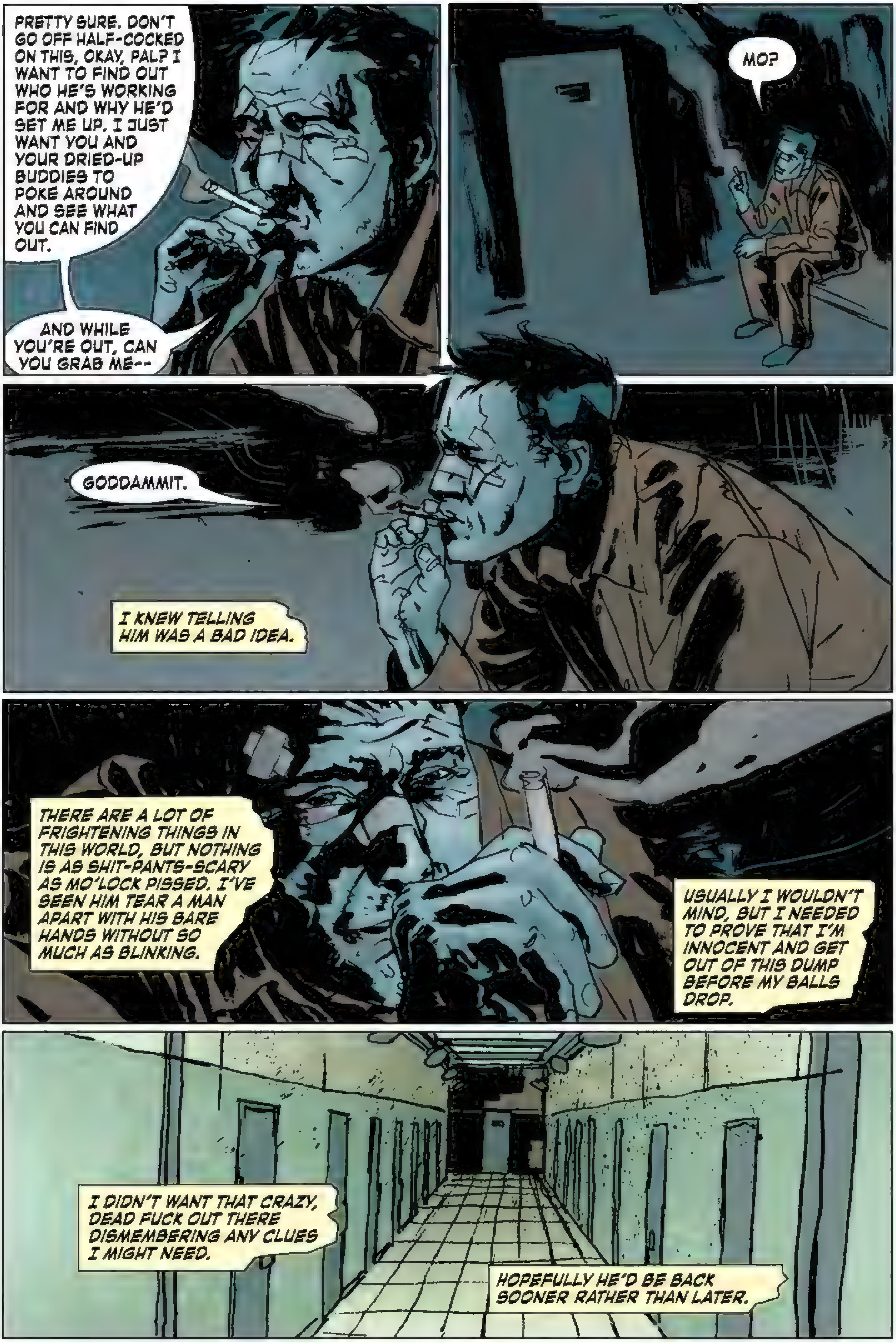

HERE.
THERE IS A GOD!
WHAT'S GOING ON IN HERE? KEEP IT THE FUCK DOWN!
SORRY, *SHITBAG.* THE VOICES IN MY HEAD GET LOUD SOMETIMES.
YOU JUST GOT ANOTHER WEEK IN HERE. KEEP IT UP.

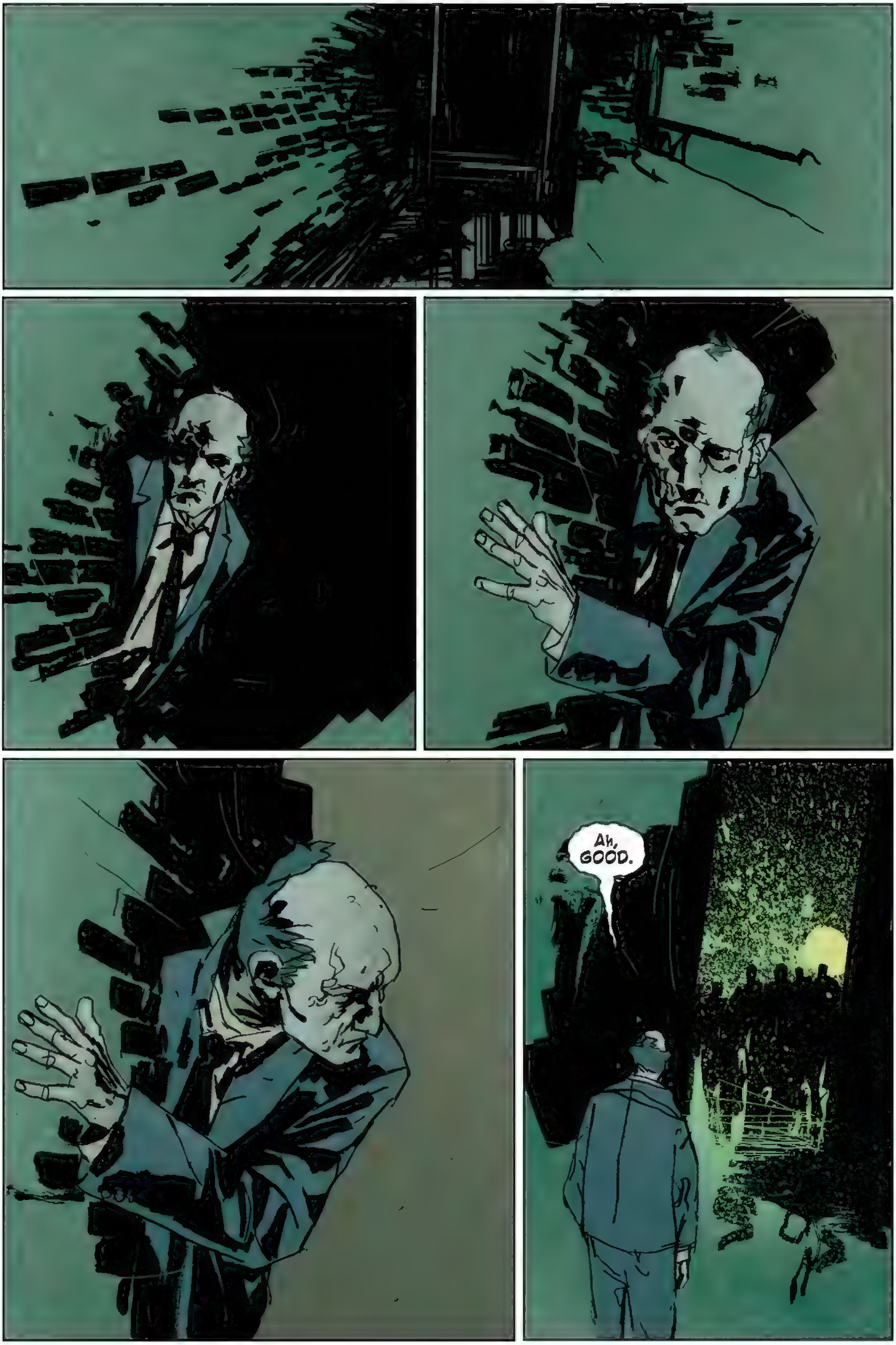

SLAM
CLIK
I SEE YOU'VE ALREADY MADE FRIENDS.
OKAY, BULLSHIT ASIDE. THIS SUCKS. I MEAN THIS REALLY FUCKING SUCKS.
WHAT HAPPENED? I TRIED TO GET TO YOU, BUT THEY HAD YOU UNDER CONSTANT SUPERVISION.

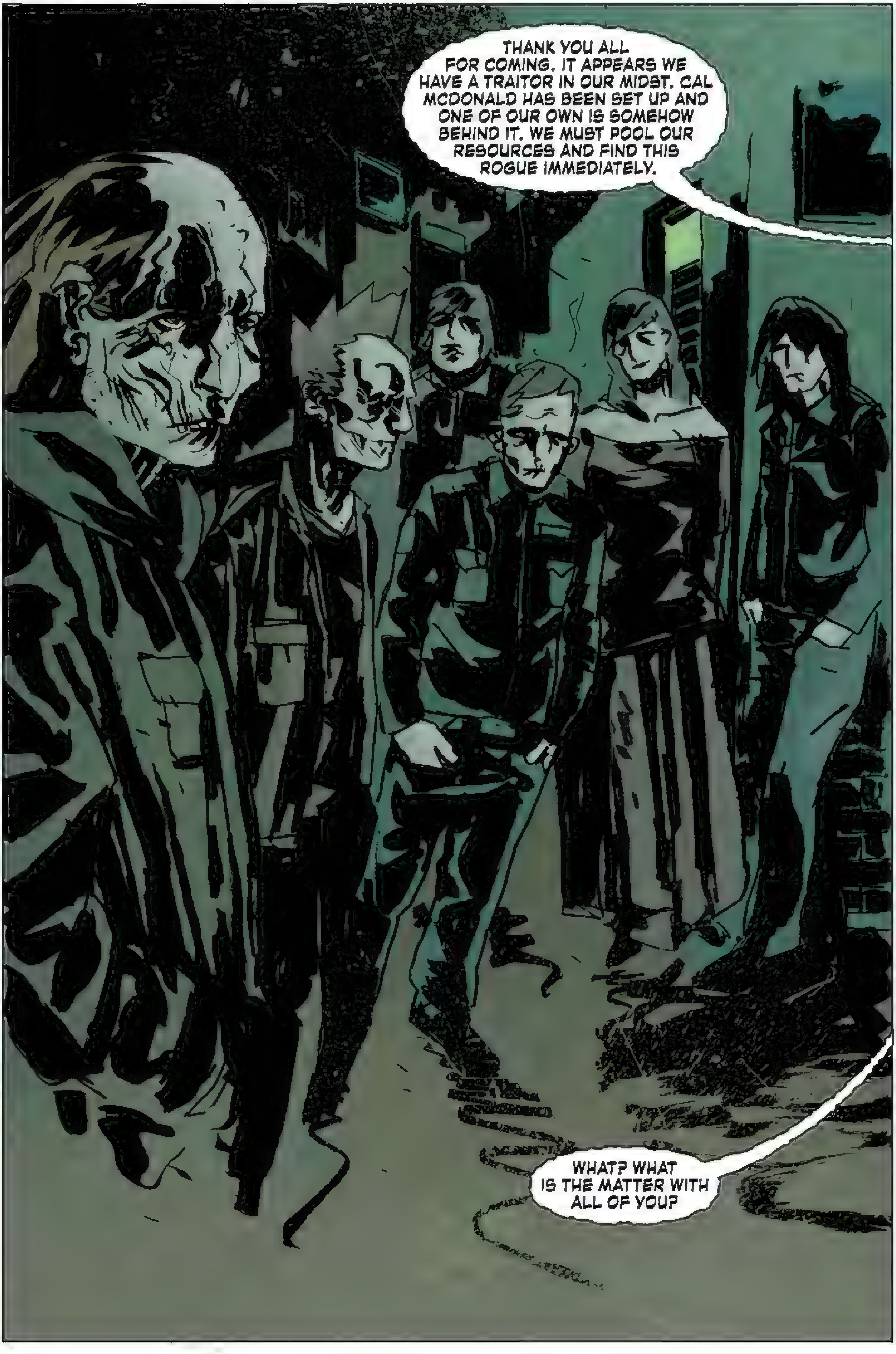

DON'T SWEAT IT, BUDDY. I THINK BENSON AND HIS CRONIES ARE ON TO THE FACT THAT I HAVE *EXTRA* HELP. YOU COULDN'T HAVE DONE ANYTHING.
WHAT I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT, BESIDES WHERE TO GET MORE PILLS AND SMOKES, IS HOW DO I GET OUT OF HERE LEGALLY? THIS WAS SUCH A FUCKING FRAME JOB.
I HAVE THIS AS WELL.
THANKS. I WAS DREADING TRYING TO BARTER FOR SMOKES WITH DUDES WHOSE HIGHEST FORMS OF COMMUNICATION ARE THROWING THEIR OWN SHIT AND SHIVVING EACH OTHER.
THE NEWSPAPERS CLAIMED YOU MURDERED SEVERAL INNOCENT PEOPLE.

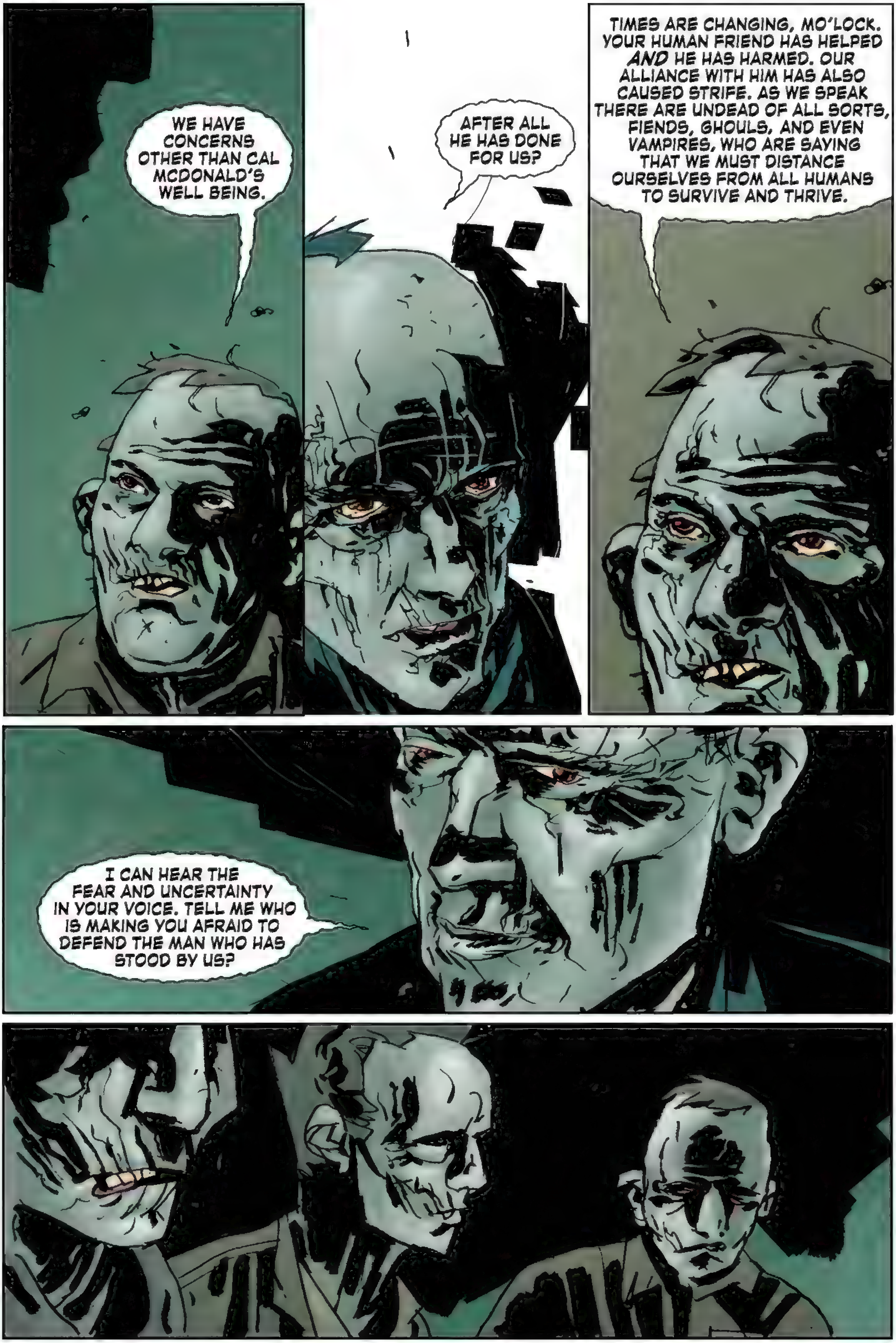

BENSON DUG UP OLD CASES HE COULD LINK ME TO. CHECK THE NAMES OF THE DECEASED. THEY WERE ALL WEREWOLVES WHEN I POPPED THEIR FURRY HOMICIDAL ASSES. THE MOTHER-FUCKER EVEN TRIED TO GET ME CHARGED WITH SABRINA'S DISAPPEARANCE.
SO IF YOU CAN TRAVEL BACK AND FORTH IN THE DARKNESS...CAN YOU BRING SHIT WITH YOU?
I BROUGHT YOU A COUPLE PILLS AND CIGARETTES. THAT'S IT. I WILL NOT BE YOUR PERSONAL DRUG RUNNER.
I'M NOT JUST GOING TO NEED DOPE IN HERE. I'LL NEED OTHER THINGS.
YES, ANYTHING I HOLD OR TOUCH CAN TRAVEL WITH ME. OTHERWISE I WOULD BE NAKED WHEN I APPEARED HERE TODAY.
LOVELY IMAGE. THANKS.
AND LISTEN, BUDDY. I HAVE SOME NEWS YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

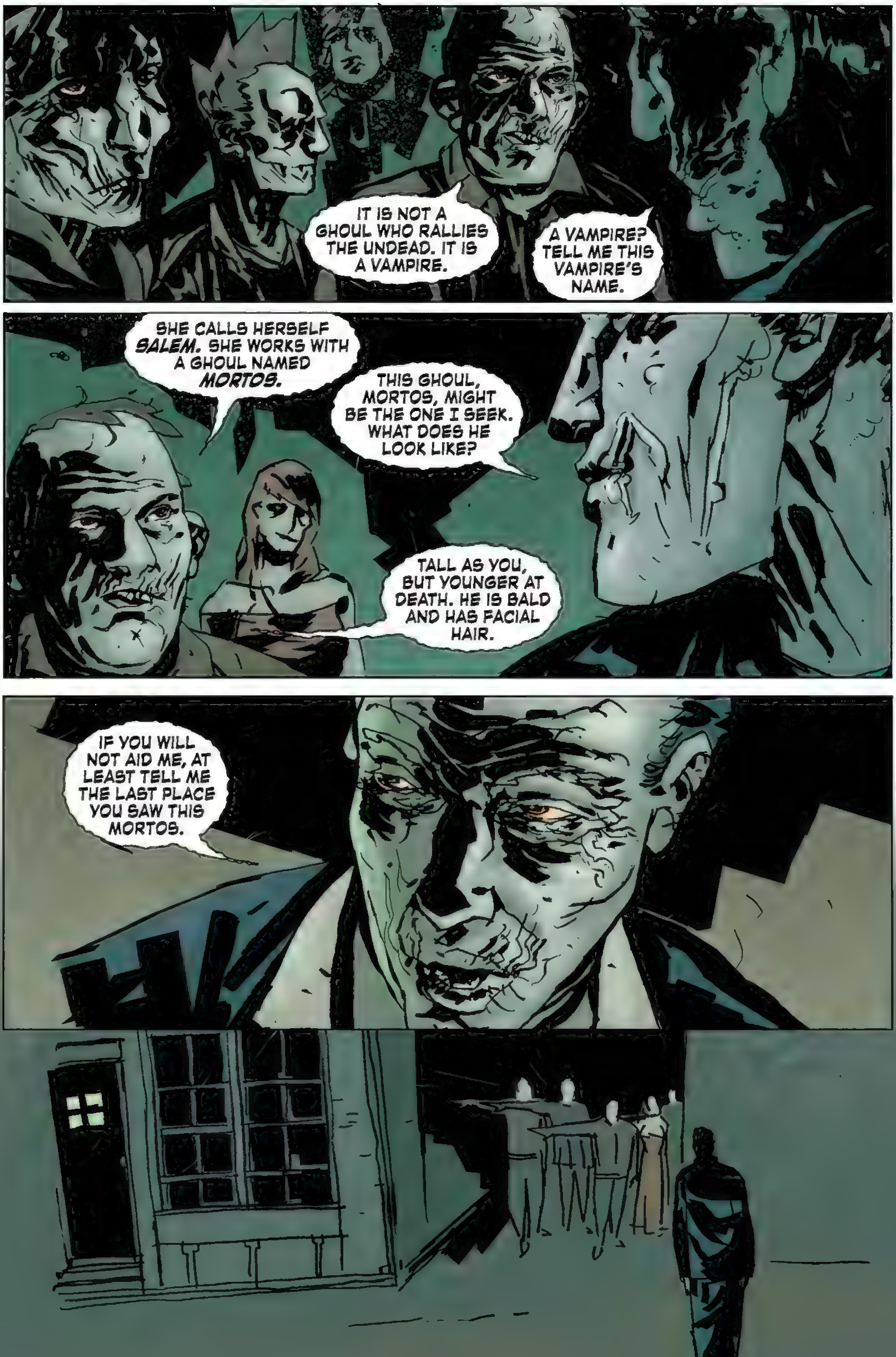

THE NIGHT I GOT BUSTED, WHEN I MADE A RUN FOR IT?
YES?
I CAME UP ON AN INTERSECTION. THERE WAS A *GHOUL* STANDING THERE. HE POINTED AND TOLD ME WHICH WAY TO GO...WHICH LED ME RIGHT INTO THE AMBUSH.
A GHOUL BETRAYED YOU?
LOOKS LIKE IT.
TELL ME WHO HE WAS.
THAT'S THE THING. I NEVER SAW THE ASSHOLE BEFORE. HE LOOKED LIKE THAT SATANIC ASSHOLE WHO DIED. WHATSHISNAME? ANTON LAVEY. YOU KNOW, BALD WITH A STUPID LITTLE GOATEE?
BALD? A GOATEE? ARE YOU SURE HE WAS A GHOUL? ONE OF MY BRETHREN?

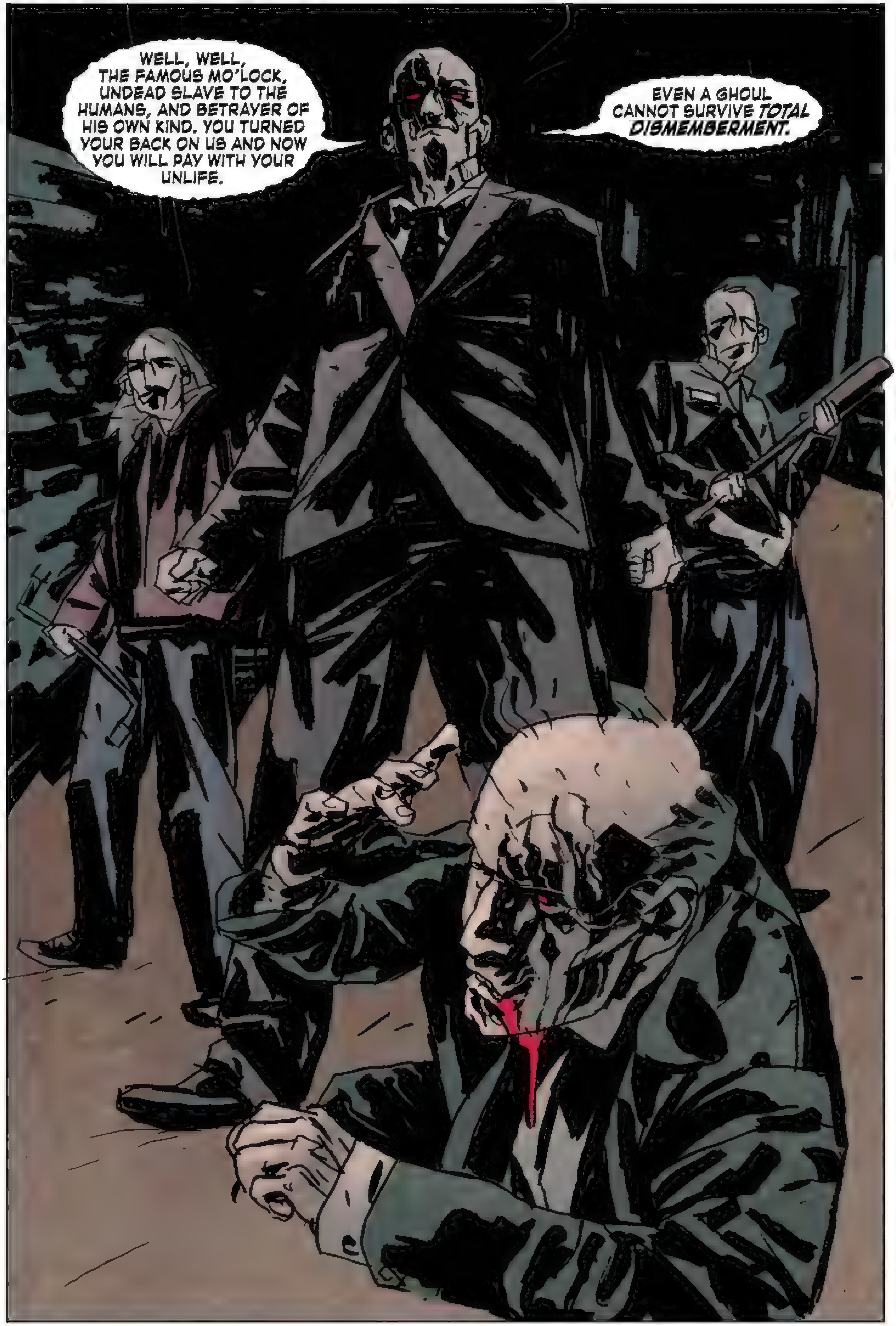

PRETTY SURE. DON'T GO OFF HALF-COCKED ON THIS, OKAY, PAL? I WANT TO FIND OUT WHO HE'S WORKING FOR AND WHY HE'D SET ME UP. I JUST WANT YOU AND YOUR DRIED-UP BUDDIES TO POKE AROUND AND SEE WHAT YOU CAN FIND OUT.
AND WHILE YOU'RE OUT, CAN YOU GRAB ME--
MO?
GODDAMMIT.
I KNEW TELLING HIM WAS A BAD IDEA.
THERE ARE A LOT OF FRIGHTENING THINGS IN THIS WORLD, BUT NOTHING IS AS SHIT-PANTS-SCARY AS MO'LOCK PISSED. I'VE SEEN HIM TEAR A MAN APART WITH HIS BARE HANDS WITHOUT SO MUCH AS BLINKING.
USUALLY I WOULDN'T MIND, BUT I NEEDED TO PROVE THAT I'M INNOCENT AND GET OUT OF THIS DUMP BEFORE MY BALLS DROP.
I DIDN'T WANT THAT CRAZY, DEAD FUCK OUT THERE DISMEMBERING ANY CLUES I MIGHT NEED.
HOPEFULLY HE'D BE BACK SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

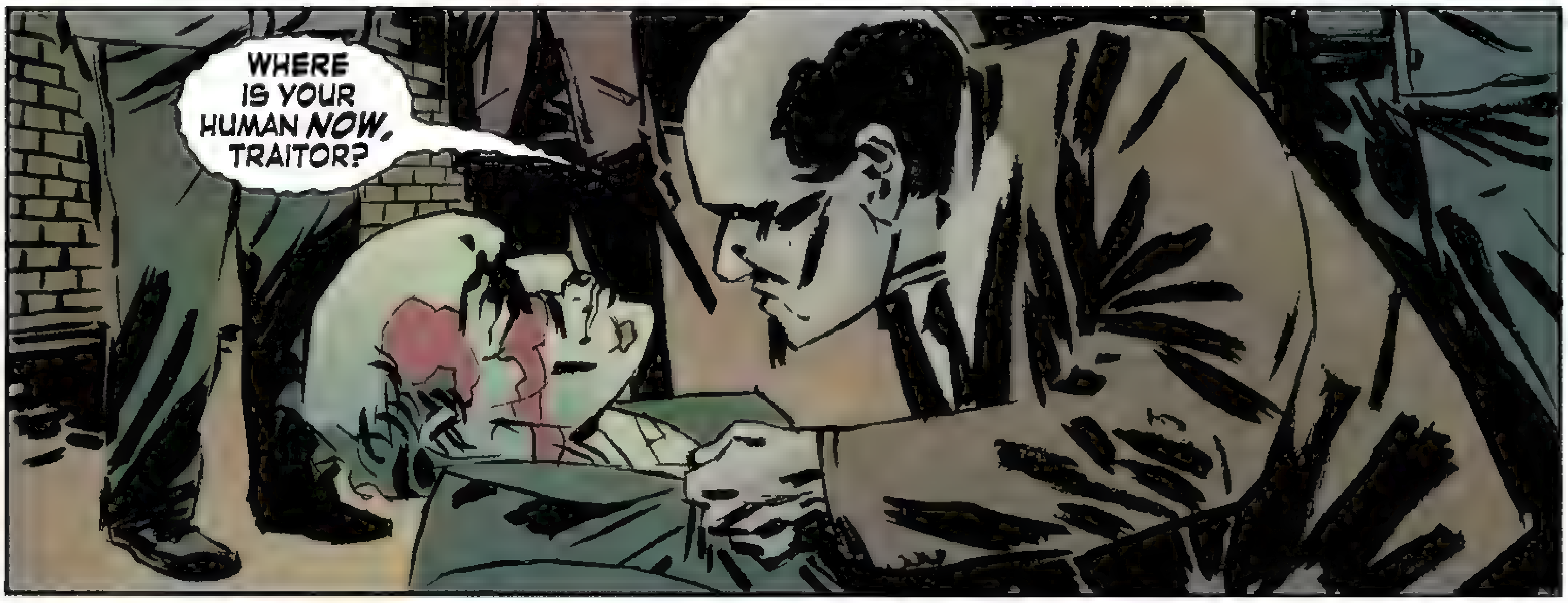

Ah, GOOD.

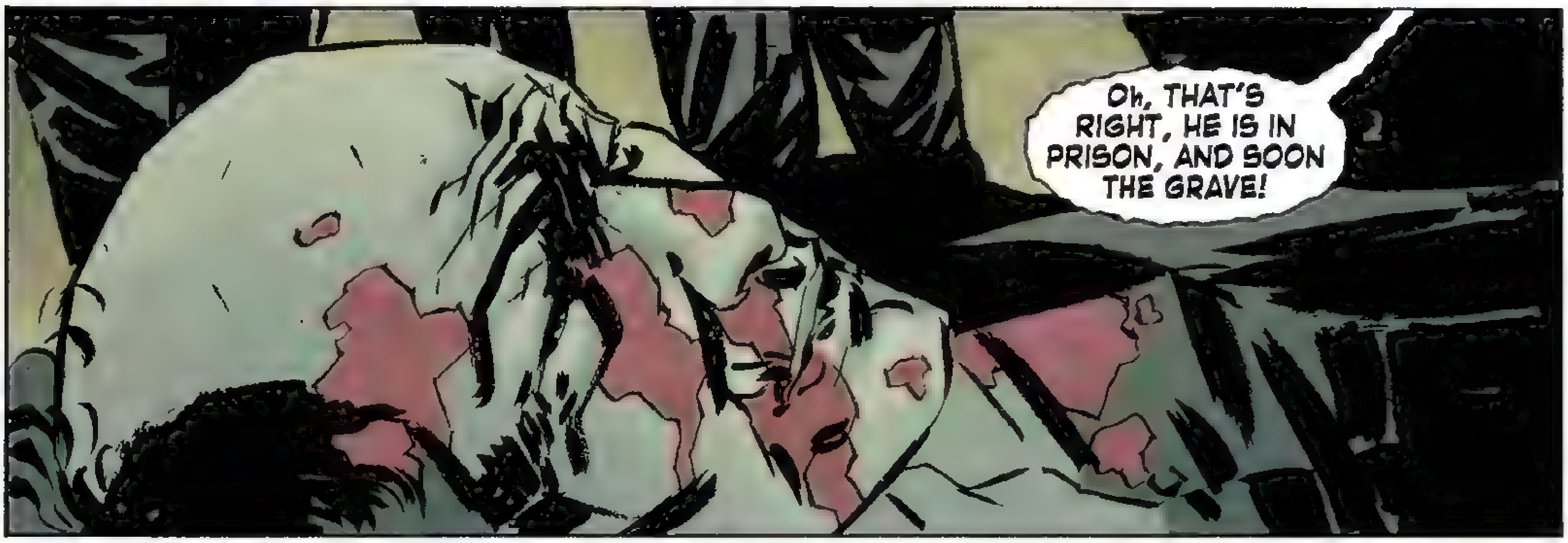

THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING. IT APPEARS WE HAVE A TRAITOR IN OUR MIDST. CAL MCDONALD HAS BEEN SET UP AND ONE OF OUR OWN IS SOMEHOW BEHIND IT. WE MUST POOL OUR RESOURCES AND FIND THIS ROGUE IMMEDIATELY.
WHAT? WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH ALL OF YOU?

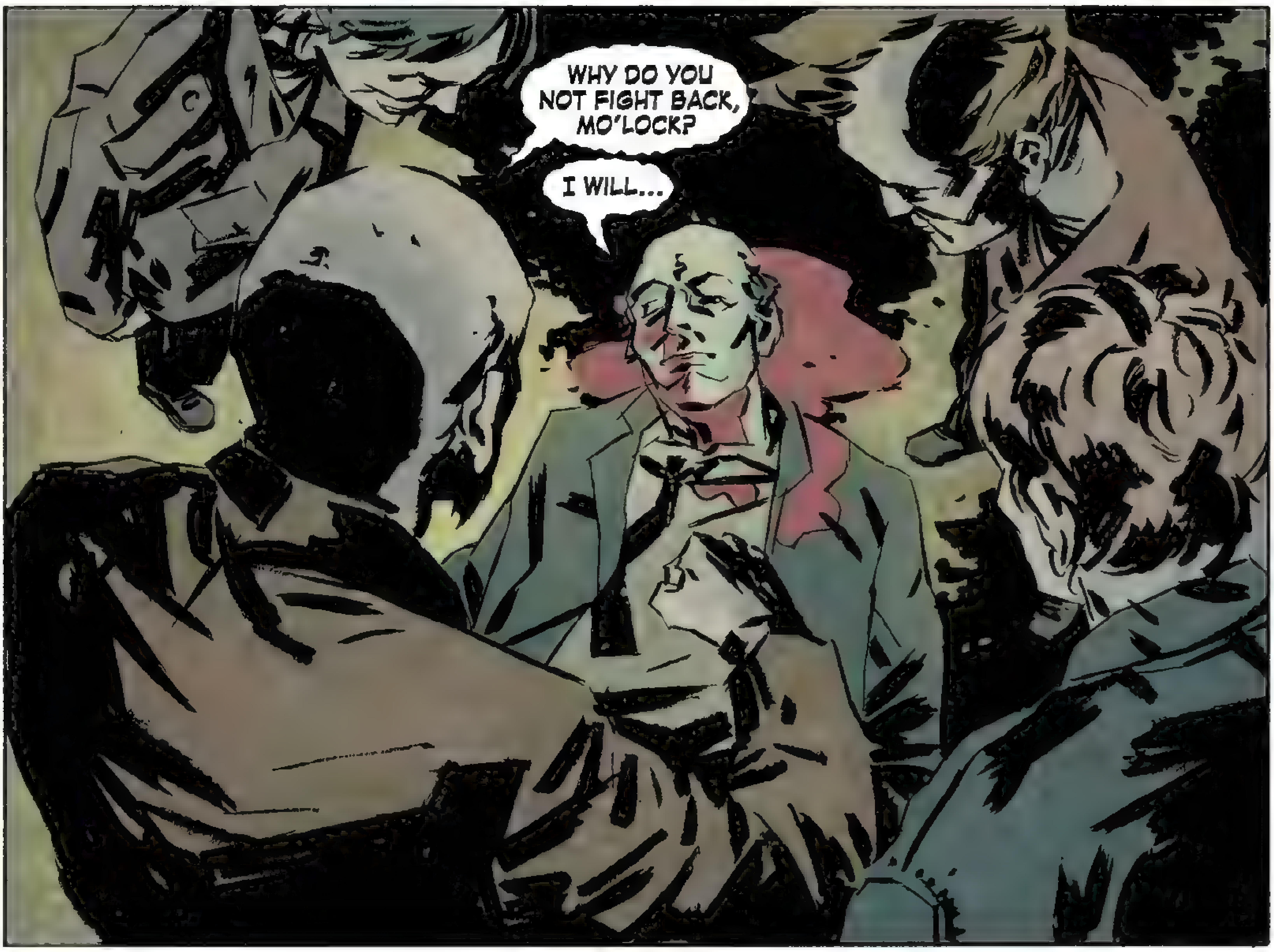

WE HAVE CONCERNS OTHER THAN CAL MCDONALD'S WELL BEING.
AFTER ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US?
TIMES ARE CHANGING, MO'LOCK. YOUR HUMAN FRIEND HAS HELPED *AND* HE HAS HARMED. OUR ALLIANCE WITH HIM HAS ALSO CAUSED STRIFE. AS WE SPEAK THERE ARE UNDEAD OF ALL SORTS, FIENDS, GHOULS, AND EVEN VAMPIRES, WHO ARE SAYING THAT WE MUST DISTANCE OURSELVES FROM ALL HUMANS TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE.
I CAN HEAR THE FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY IN YOUR VOICE. TELL ME WHO IS MAKING YOU AFRAID TO DEFEND THE MAN WHO HAS STOOD BY US?

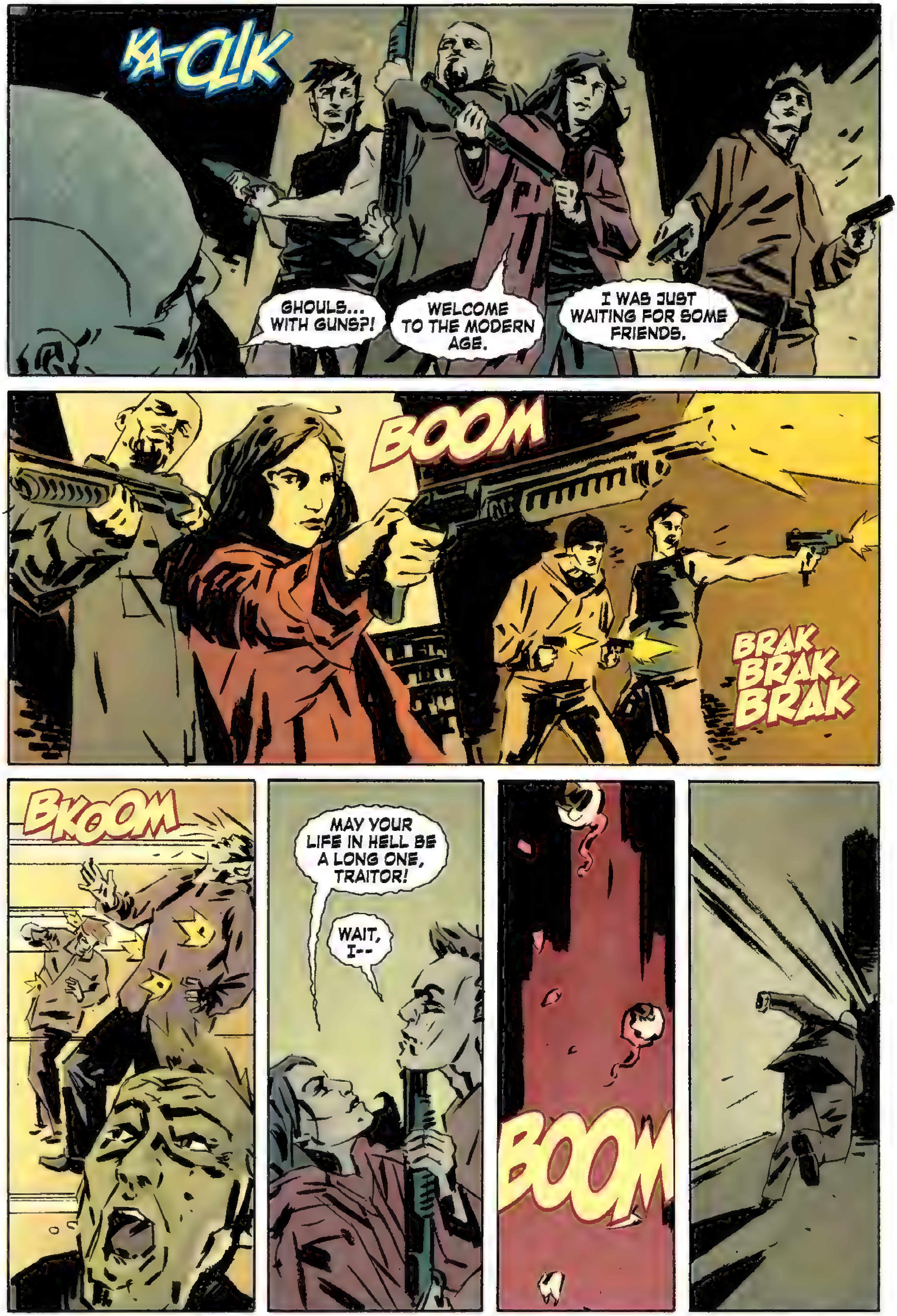

IT IS NOT A GHOUL WHO RALLIES THE UNDEAD. IT IS A VAMPIRE.
A VAMPIRE? TELL ME THIS VAMPIRE'S NAME.
SHE CALLS HERSELF *SALEM*. SHE WORKS WITH A GHOUL NAMED *MORTOS.*
THIS GHOUL, MORTOS, MIGHT BE THE ONE I SEEK. WHAT DOES HE LOOK LIKE?
TALL AS YOU, BUT YOUNGER AT DEATH. HE IS BALD AND HAS FACIAL HAIR.
IF YOU WILL NOT AID ME, AT LEAST TELL ME THE LAST PLACE YOU SAW THIS MORTOS.

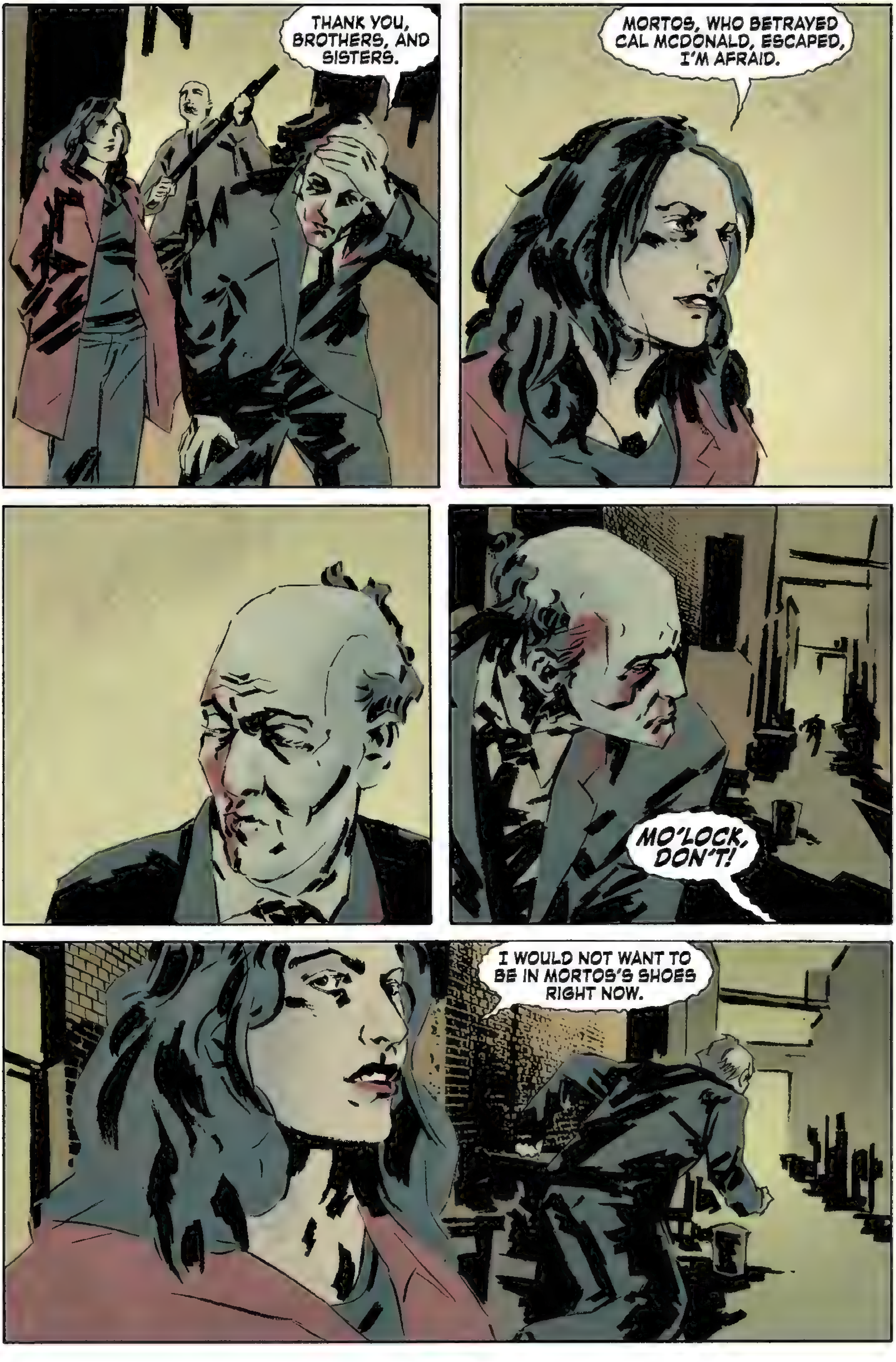

WELL, WELL, THE FAMOUS MO'LOCK, UNDEAD SLAVE TO THE HUMANS, AND BETRAYER OF HIS OWN KIND. YOU TURNED YOUR BACK ON US AND NOW YOU WILL PAY WITH YOUR UNLIFE.
EVEN A GHOUL CANNOT SURVIVE *TOTAL DISMEMBERMENT.*

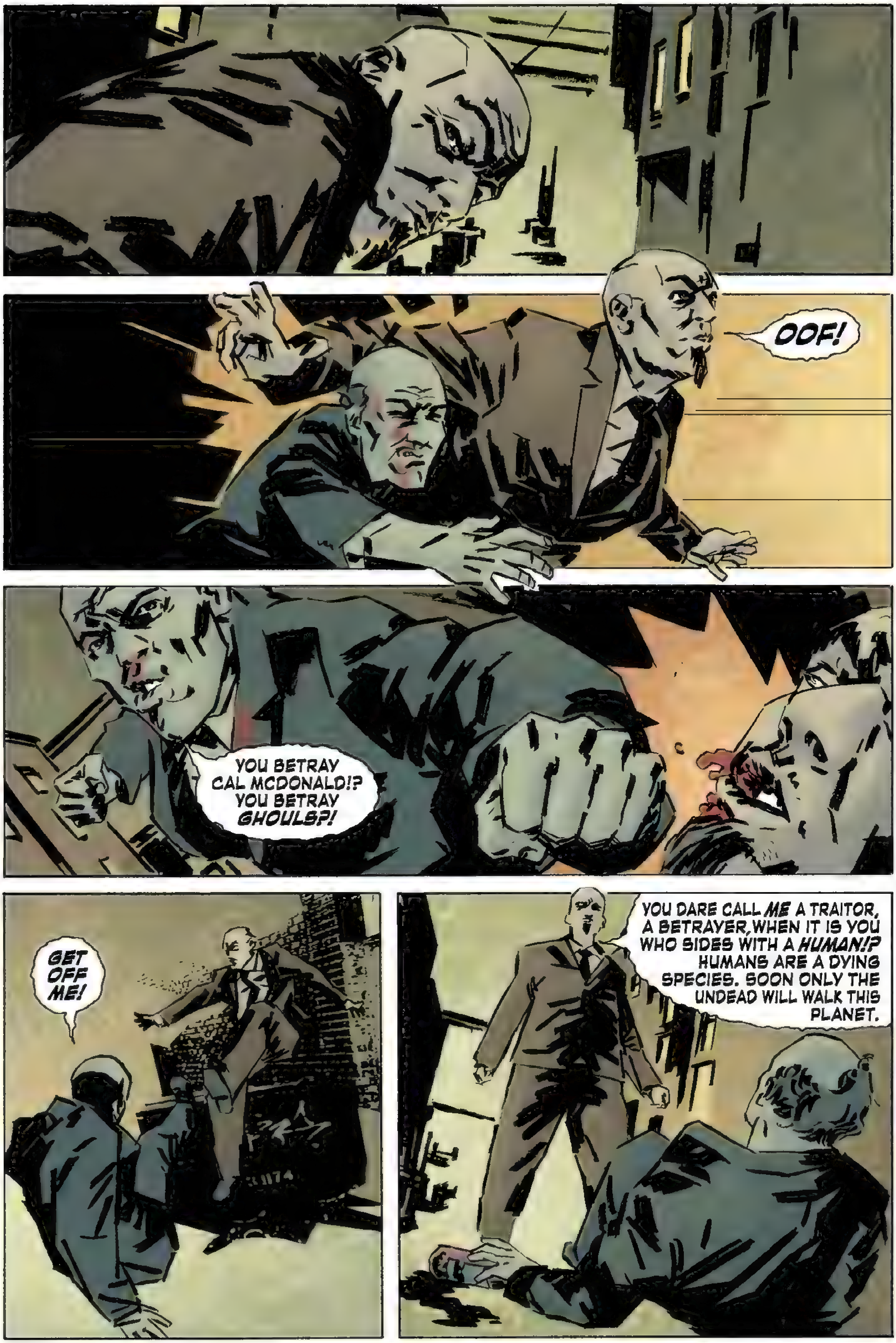

WHERE IS YOUR HUMAN *NOW*, TRAITOR?

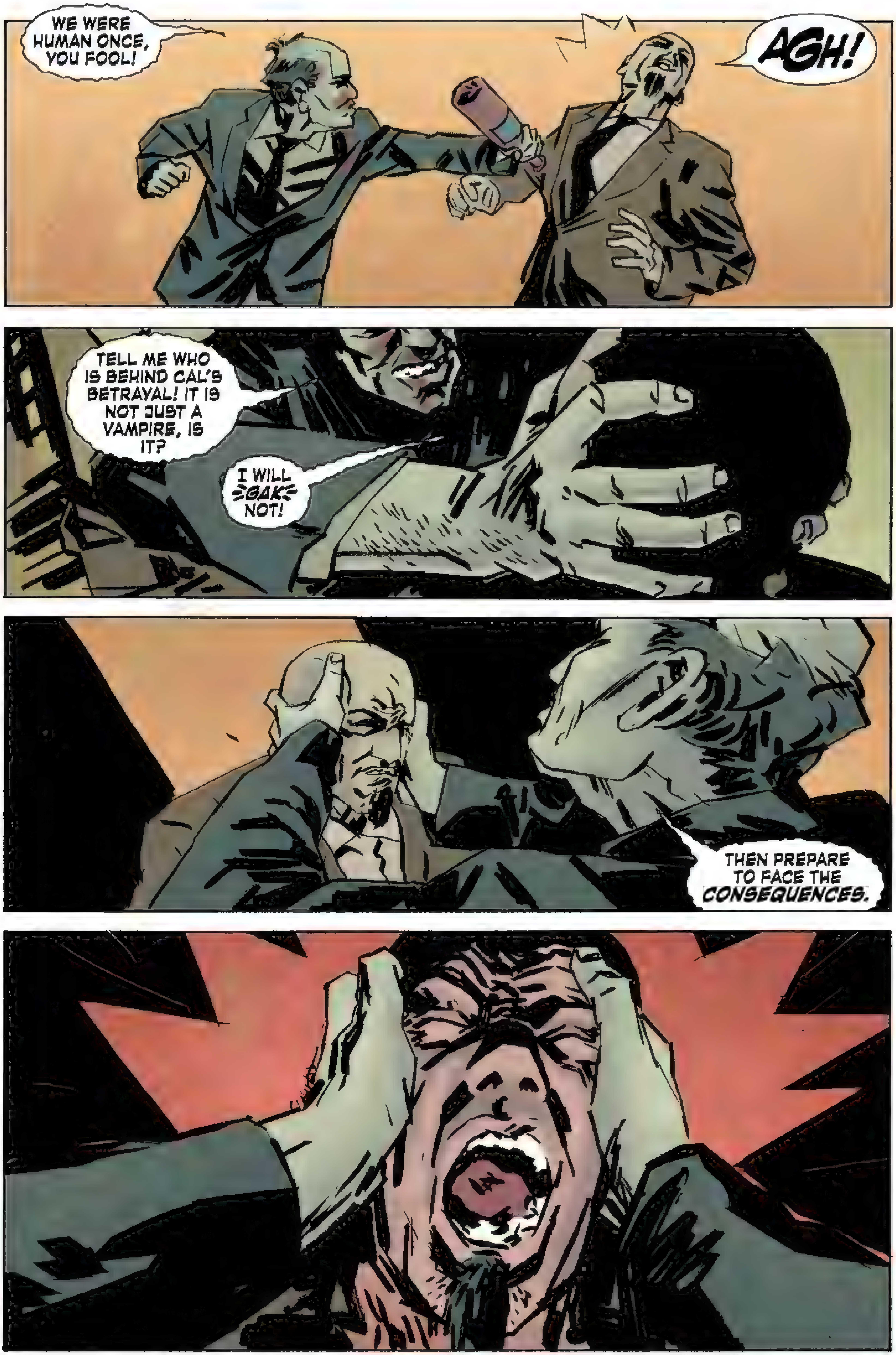

Oh, THAT'S RIGHT, HE IS IN PRISON, AND SOON THE GRAVE!

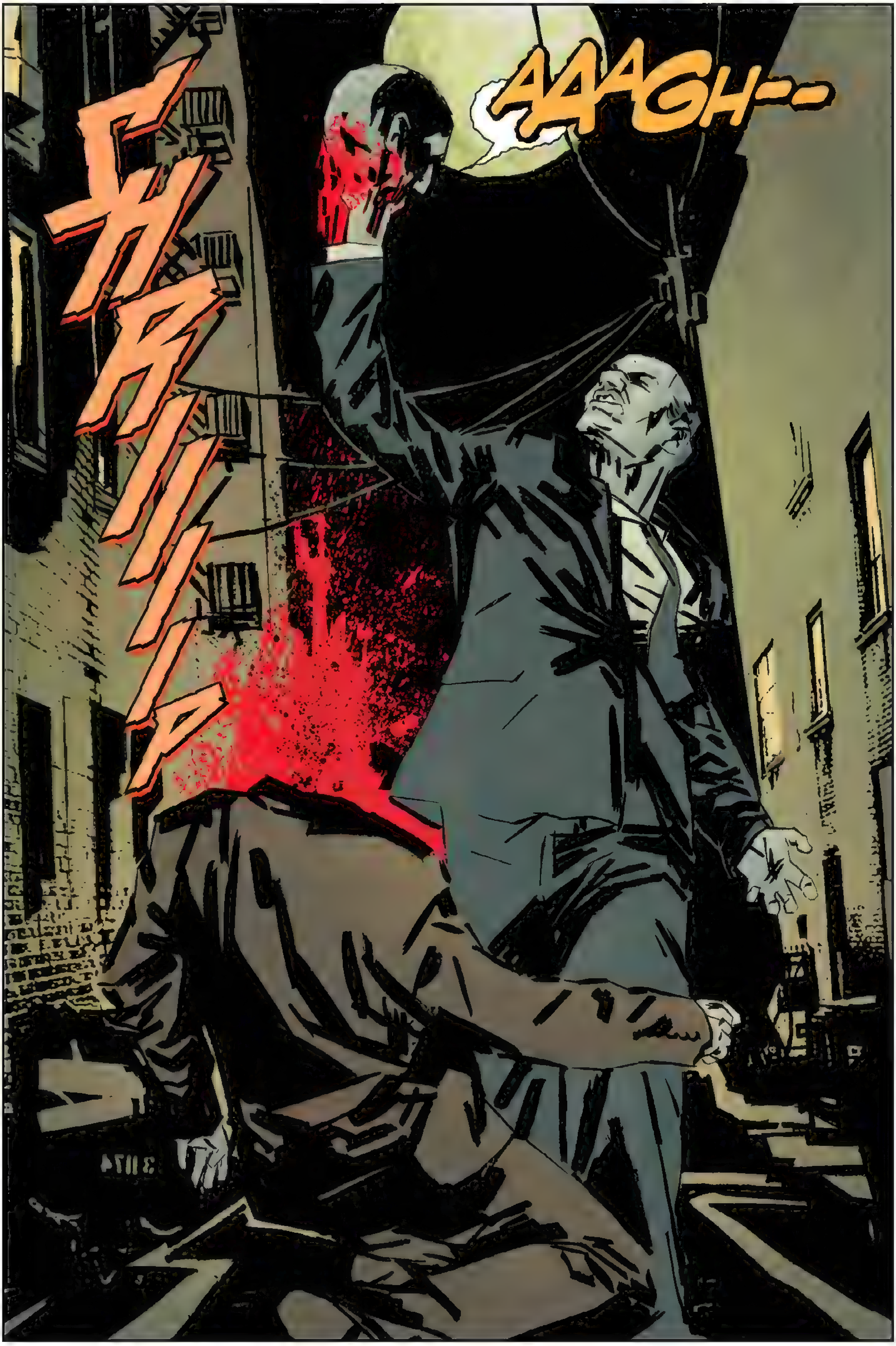

WHY DO YOU NOT FIGHT BACK, MO'LOCK?
I WILL...

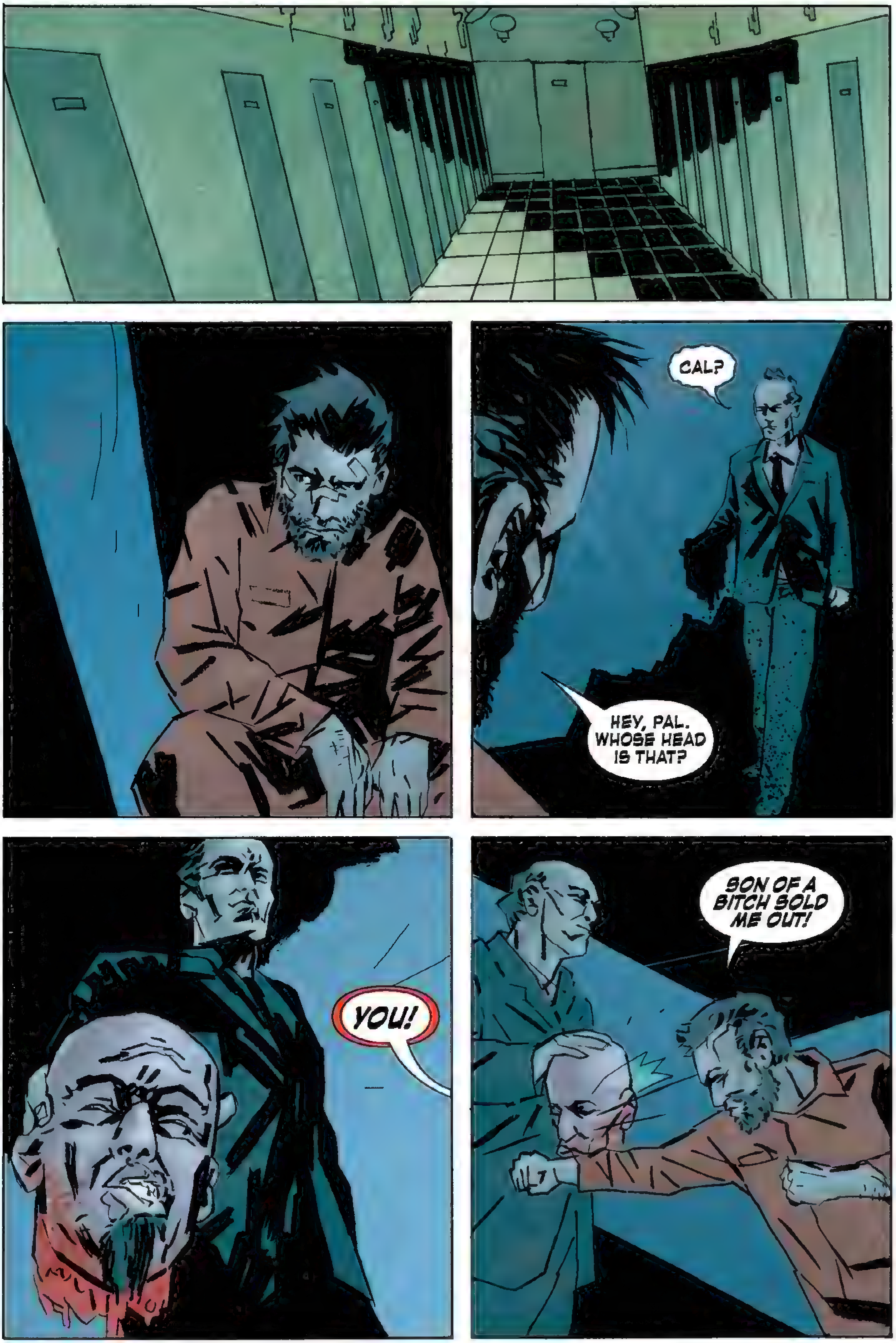

KA-CLIK
GHOULS... WITH GUNS?!
WELCOME TO THE MODERN AGE.
I WAS JUST WAITING FOR SOME FRIENDS.
BOOM
BRAK BRAK BRAK
BKOOM
MAY YOUR LIFE IN HELL BE A LONG ONE, TRAITOR!
WAIT, I--
BOOM

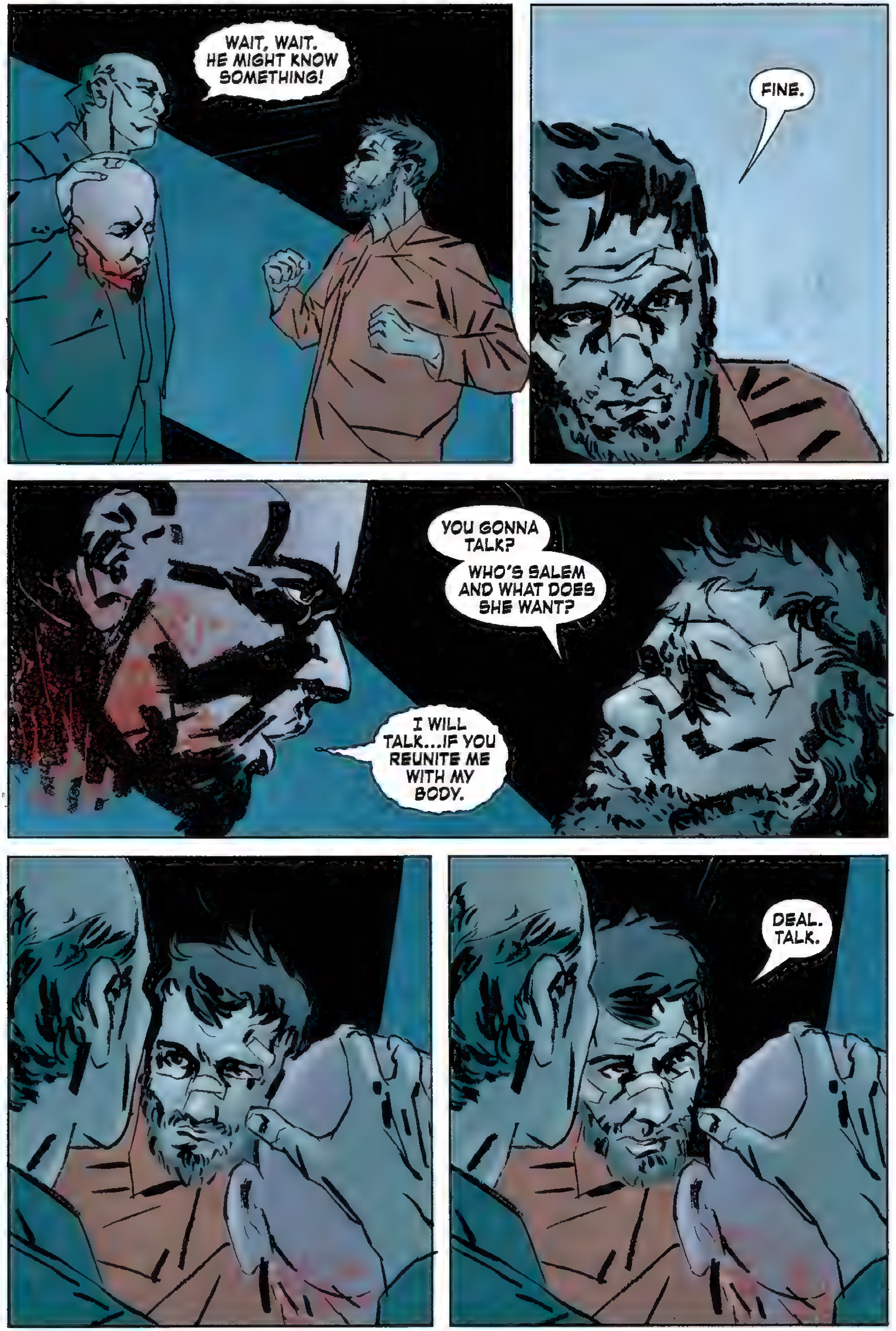

THANK YOU, BROTHERS, AND SISTERS.
MORTOS, WHO BETRAYED CAL MCDONALD, ESCAPED, I'M AFRAID.
MO'LOCK, DON'T!
I WOULD NOT WANT TO BE IN MORTOS'S SHOES RIGHT NOW.

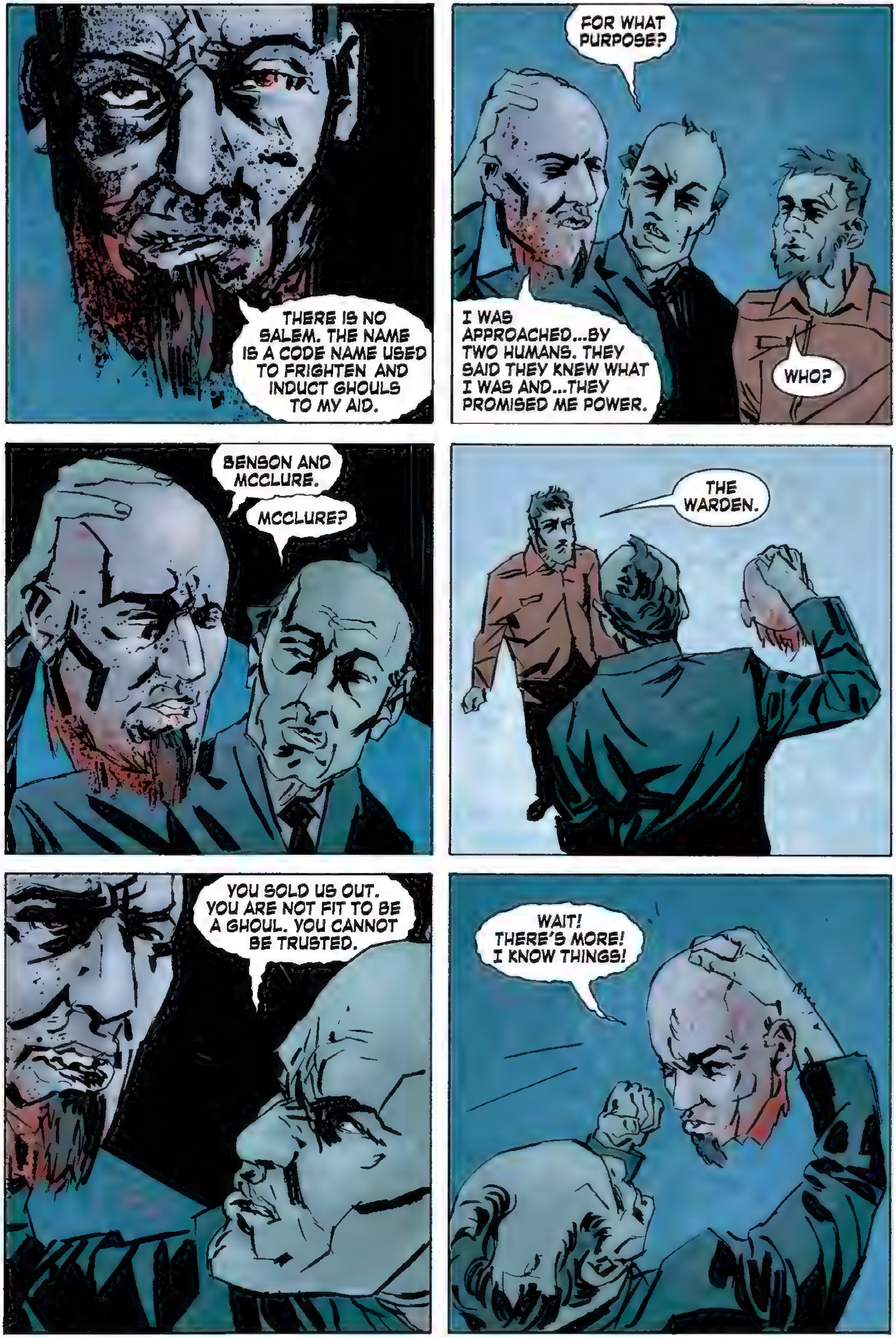

OOF!
YOU BETRAY CAL MCDONALD!? YOU BETRAY GHOULS?!
GET OFF ME!
YOU DARE CALL ME A TRAITOR, A BETRAYER, WHEN IT IS YOU WHO SIDES WITH A HUMAN!? HUMANS ARE A DYING SPECIES. SOON ONLY THE UNDEAD WILL WALK THIS PLANET.

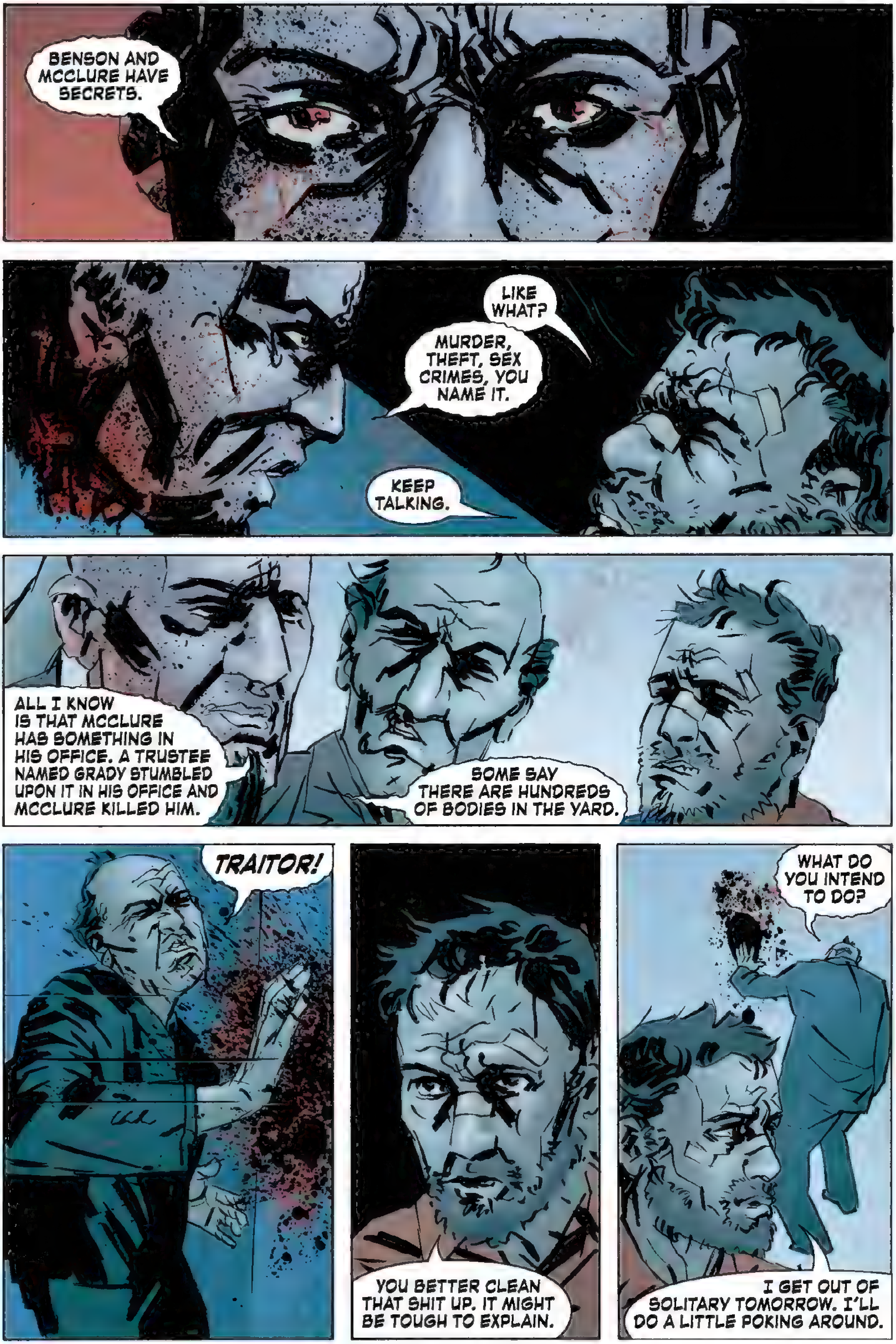

WE WERE HUMAN ONCE, YOU FOOL!
AGH!
TELL ME WHO IS BEHIND CAL'S BETRAYAL! IT IS NOT JUST A VAMPIRE, IS IT?
I WILL *GAK* NOT!
THEN PREPARE TO FACE THE *CONSEQUENCES.*

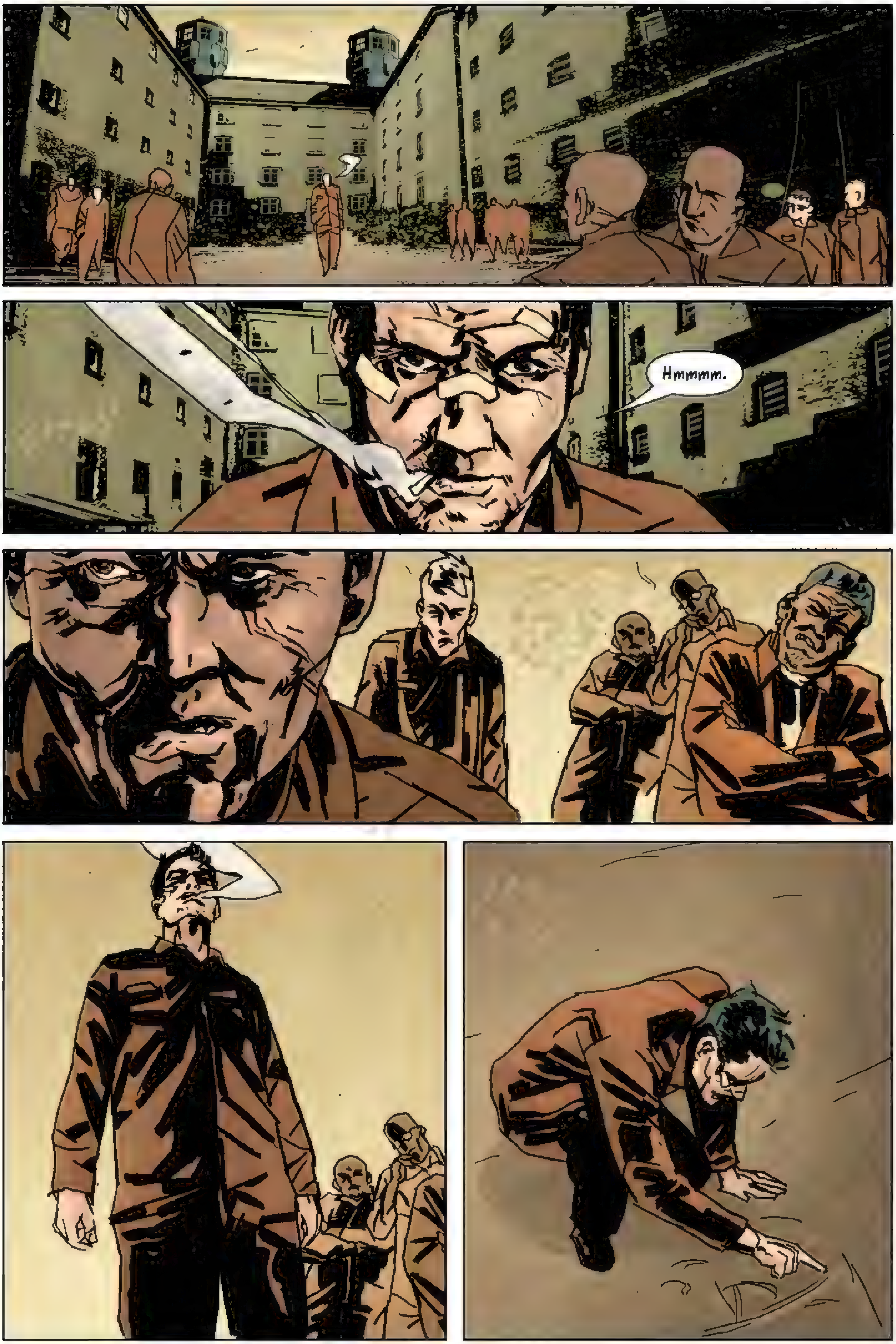

CHAIIIA
AAAGH--

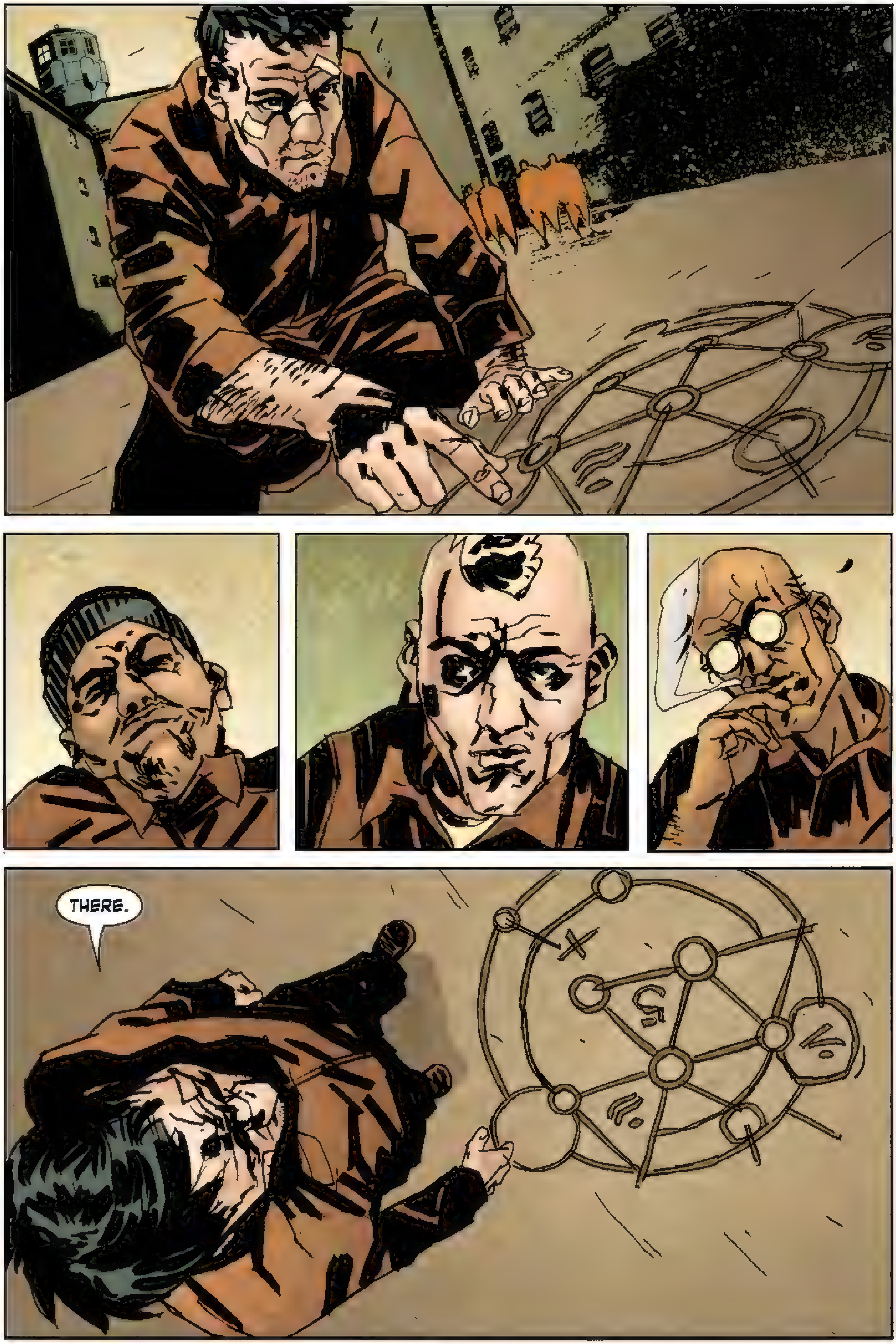

CAL?
HEY, PAL. WHOSE HEAD IS THAT?
YOU!
SON OF A BITCH SOLD ME OUT!

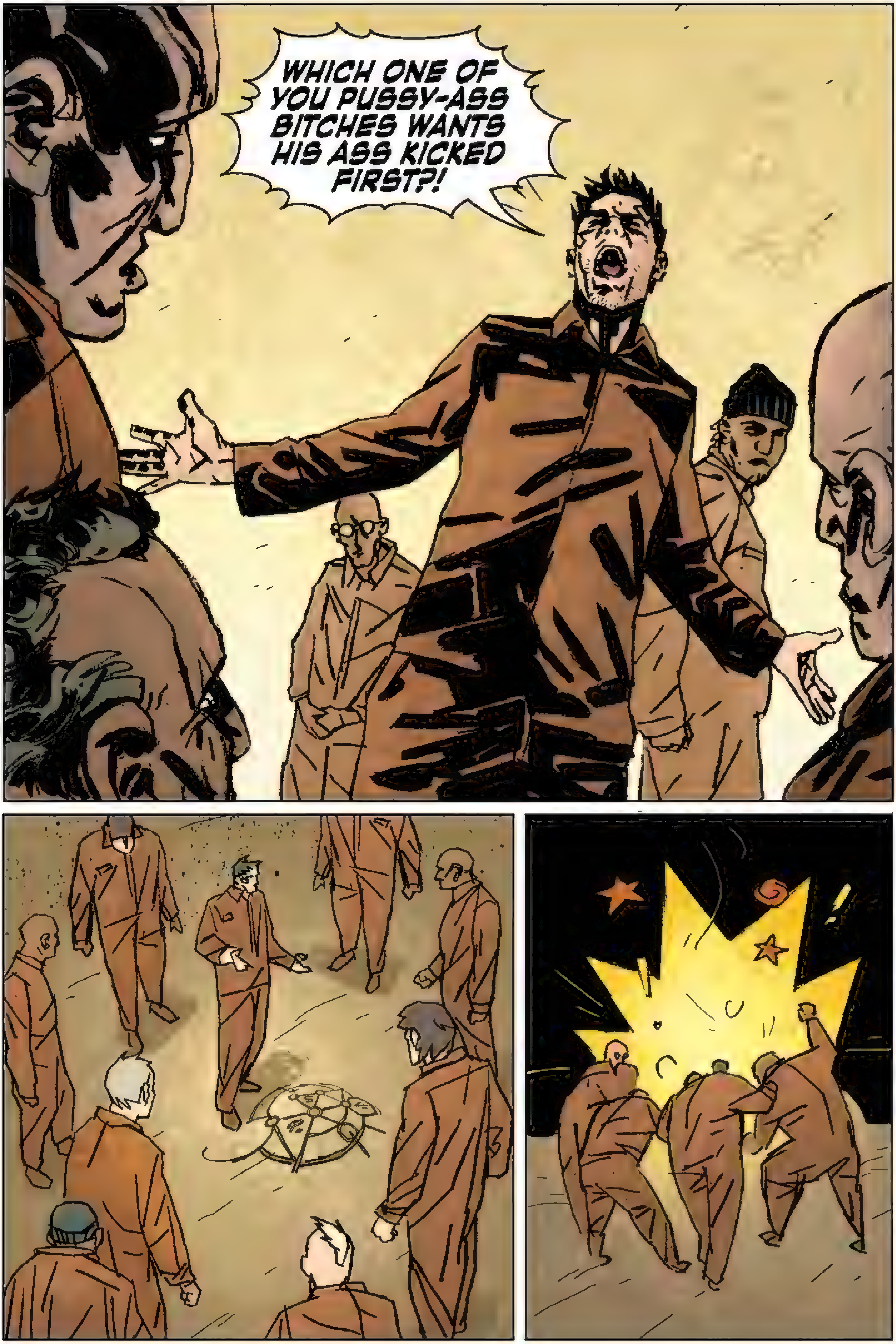

WAIT, WAIT. HE MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING!
FINE.
YOU GONNA TALK?
WHO'S SALEM AND WHAT DOES SHE WANT?
I WILL TALK...IF YOU REUNITE ME WITH MY BODY.
DEAL. TALK.

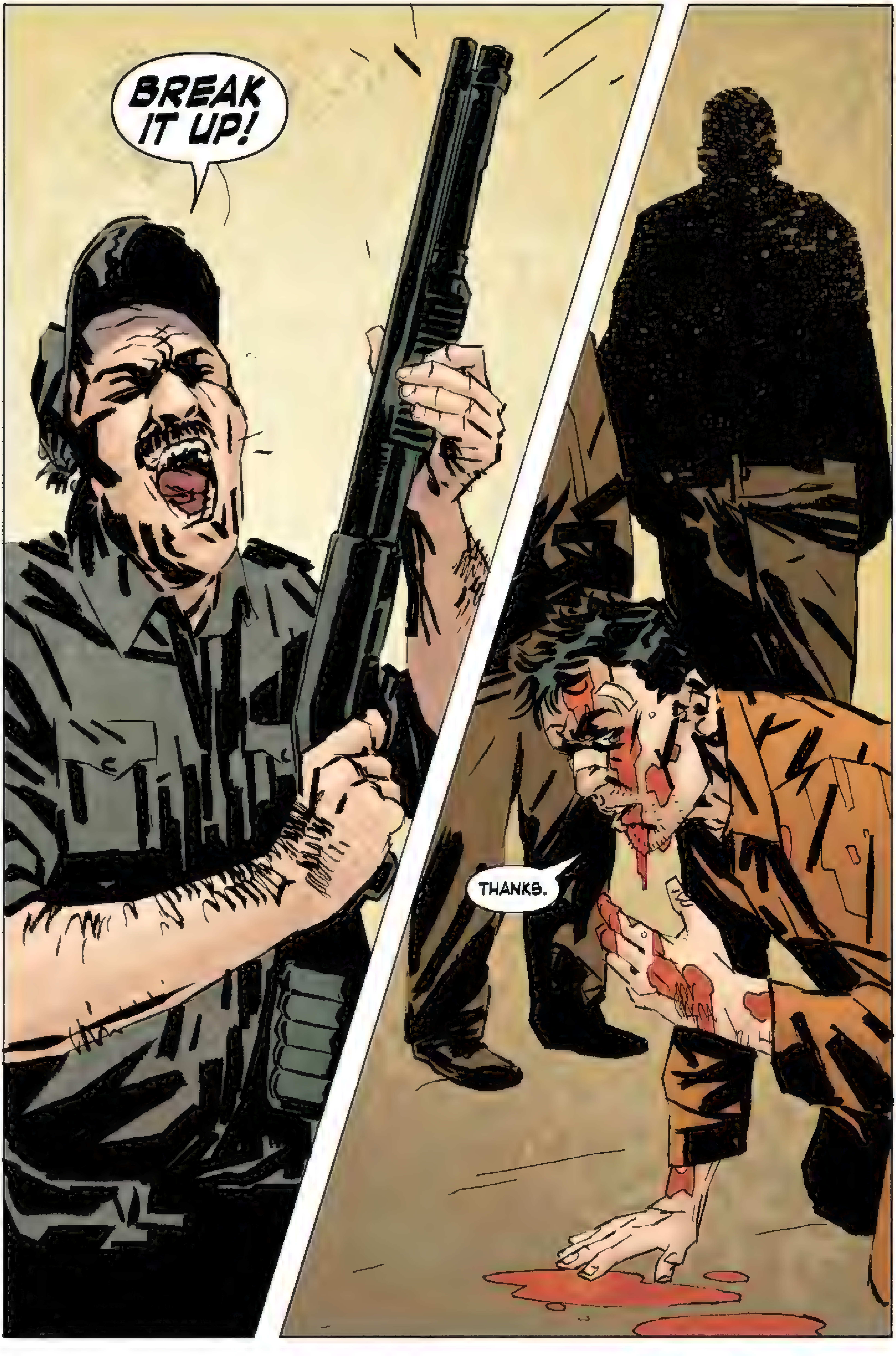

THERE IS NO SALEM. THE NAME IS A CODE NAME USED TO FRIGHTEN AND INDUCT GHOULS TO MY AID.
FOR WHAT PURPOSE?
I WAS APPROACHED...BY TWO HUMANS. THEY SAID THEY KNEW WHAT I WAS AND...THEY PROMISED ME POWER.
WHO?
BENSON AND MCCLURE.
MCCLURE?
THE WARDEN.
YOU SOLD US OUT. YOU ARE NOT FIT TO BE A GHOUL. YOU CANNOT BE TRUSTED.
WAIT! THERE'S MORE! I KNOW THINGS!

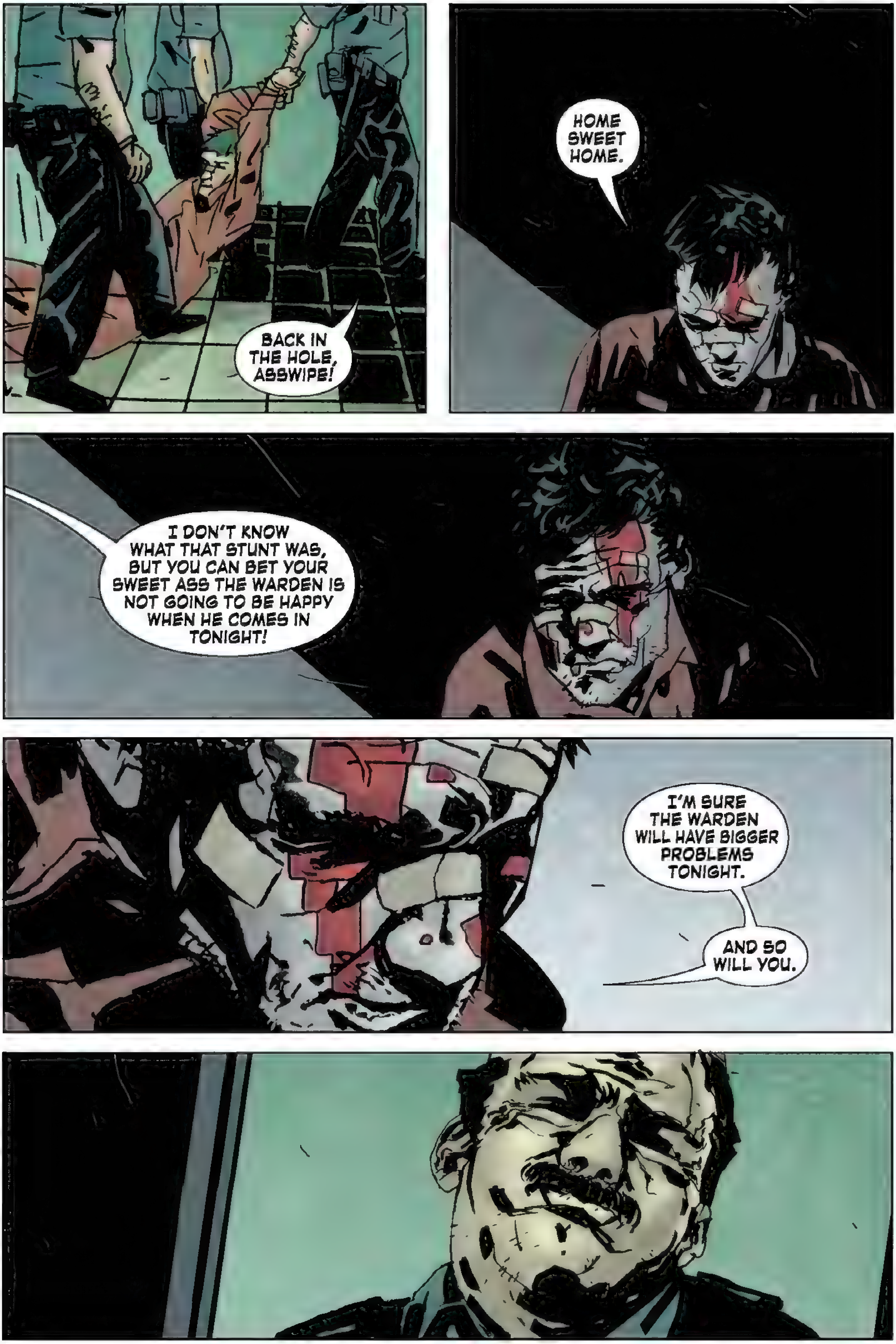

BENSON AND MCCLURE HAVE SECRETS.
LIKE WHAT?
MURDER, THEFT, SEX CRIMES, YOU NAME IT.
KEEP TALKING.
ALL I KNOW IS THAT MCCLURE HAS SOMETHING IN HIS OFFICE. A TRUSTEE NAMED GRADY STUMBLED UPON IT IN HIS OFFICE AND MCCLURE KILLED HIM.
SOME SAY THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF BODIES IN THE YARD.
TRAITOR!
YOU BETTER CLEAN THAT SHIT UP. IT MIGHT BE TOUGH TO EXPLAIN.
WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO?
I GET OUT OF SOLITARY TOMORROW. I'LL DO A LITTLE POKING AROUND.

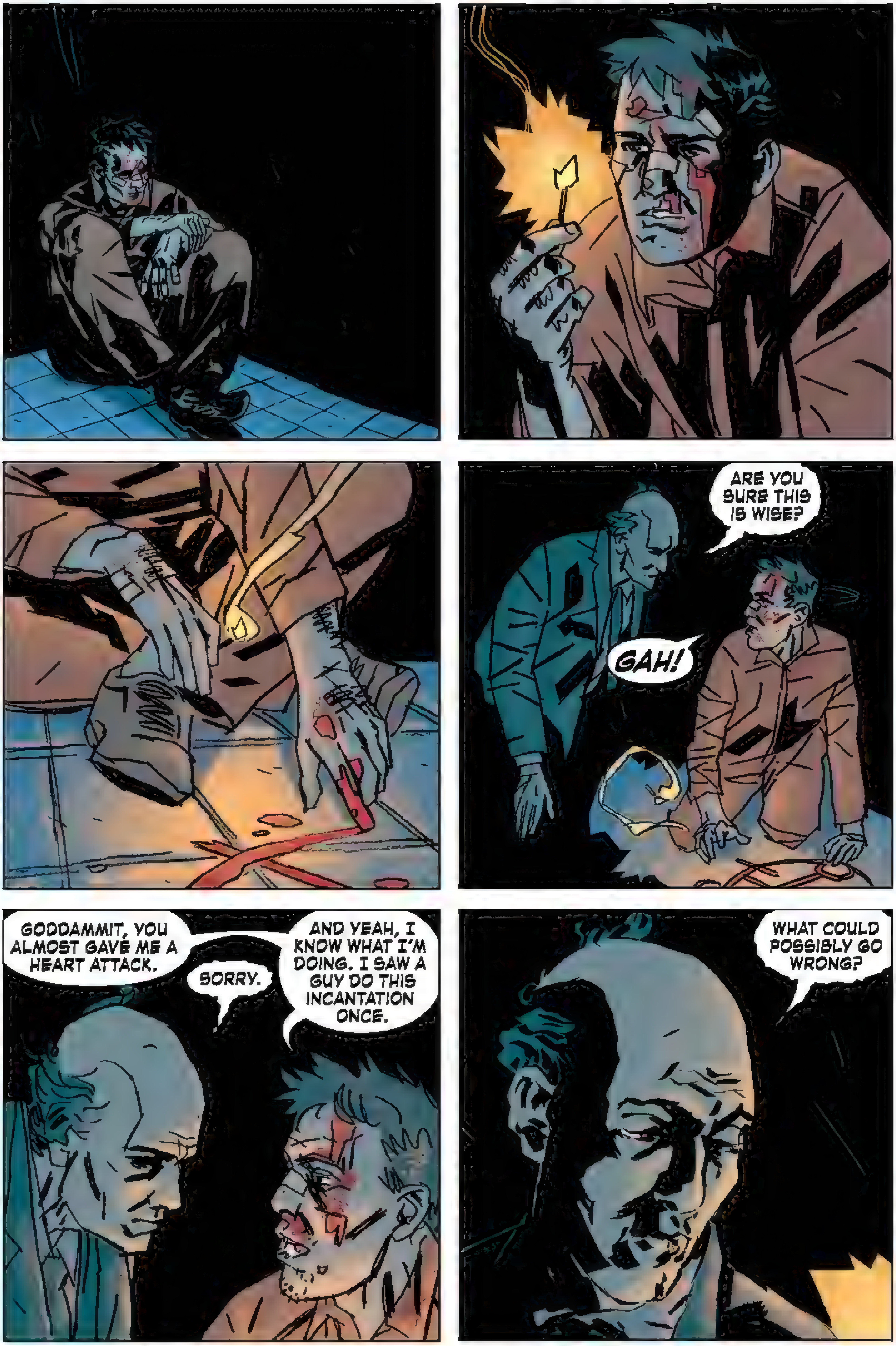

Hmmmm.

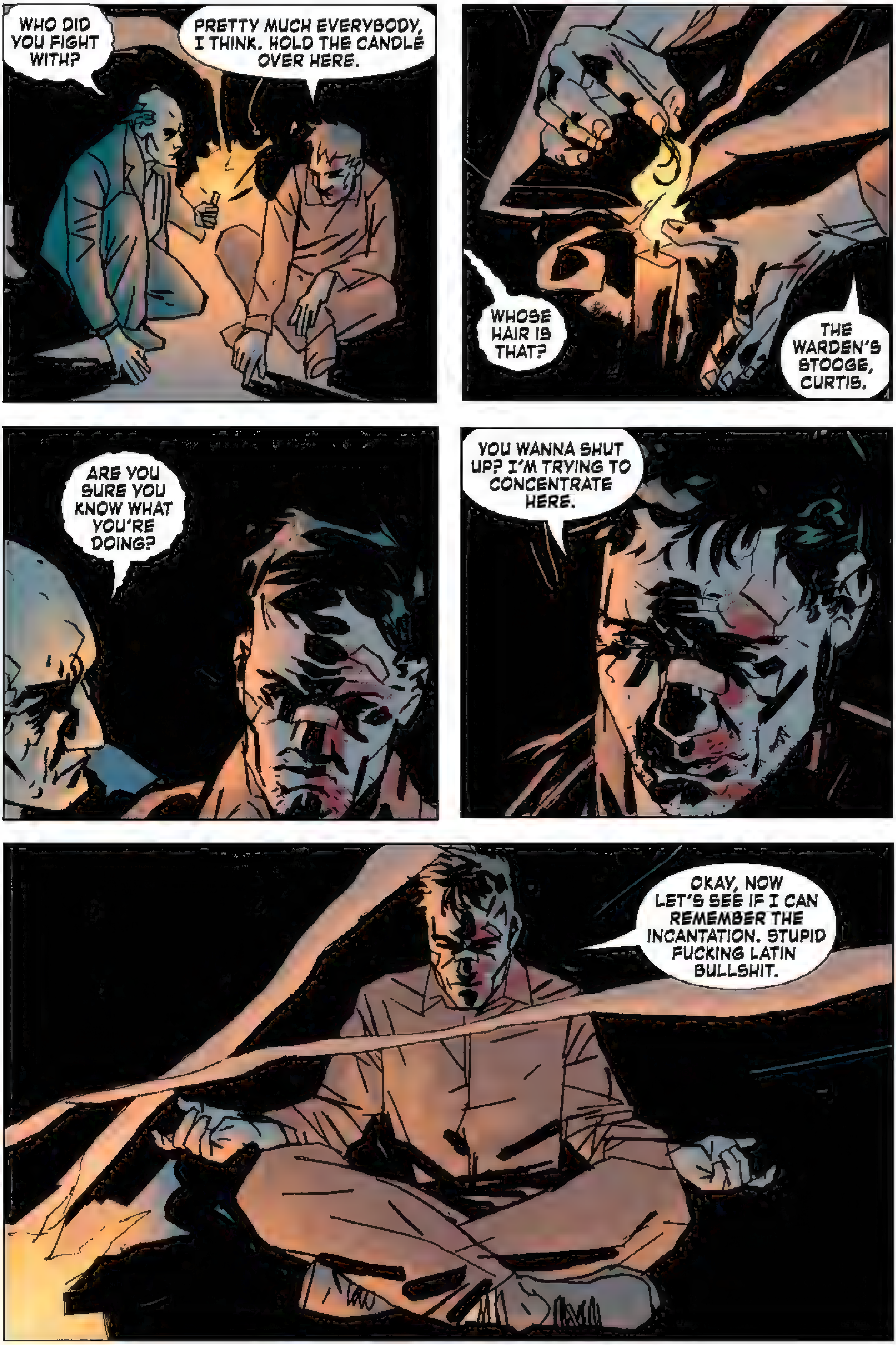

THERE.

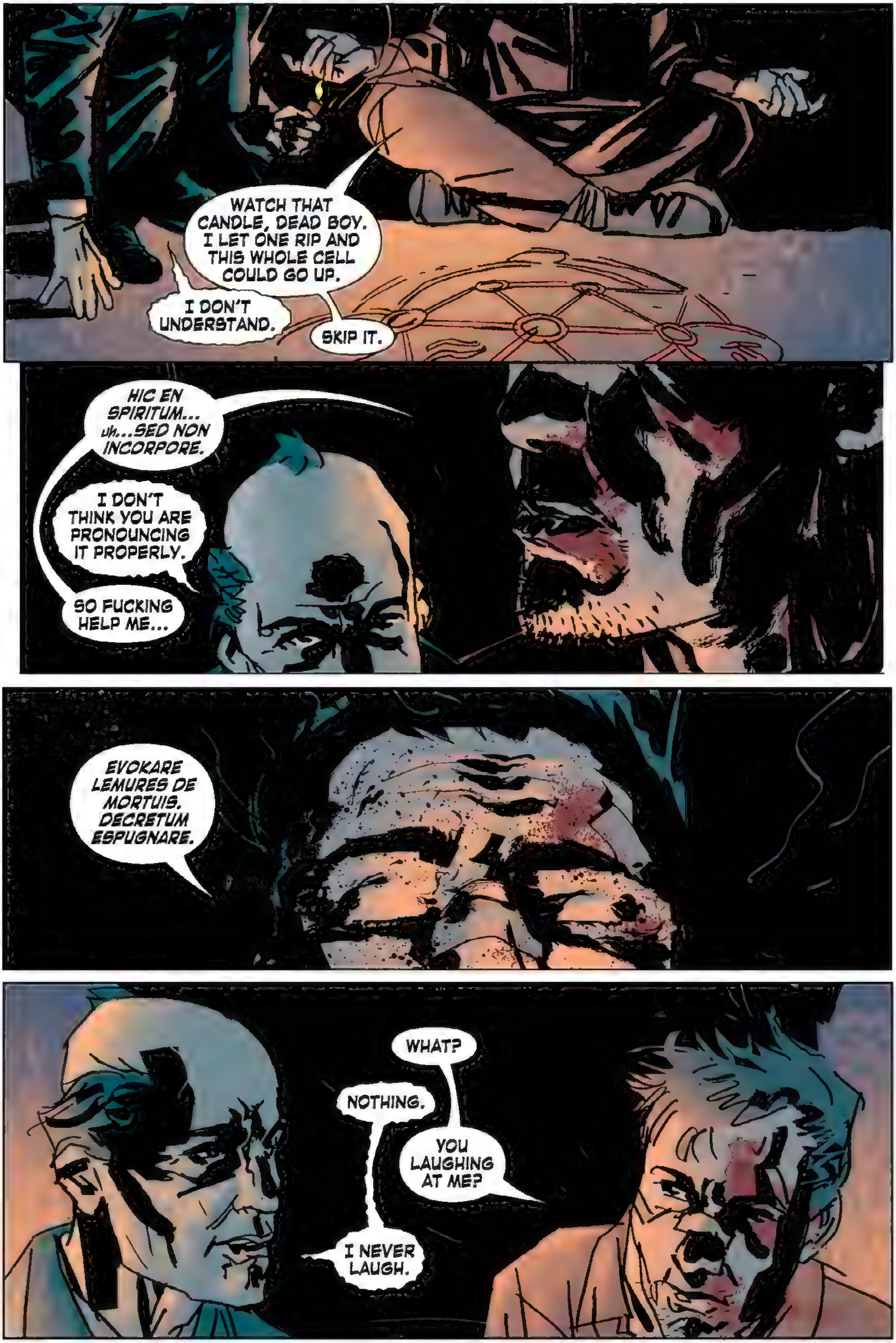

WHICH ONE OF YOU PUSSY-ASS BITCHES WANTS HIS ASS KICKED FIRST?!

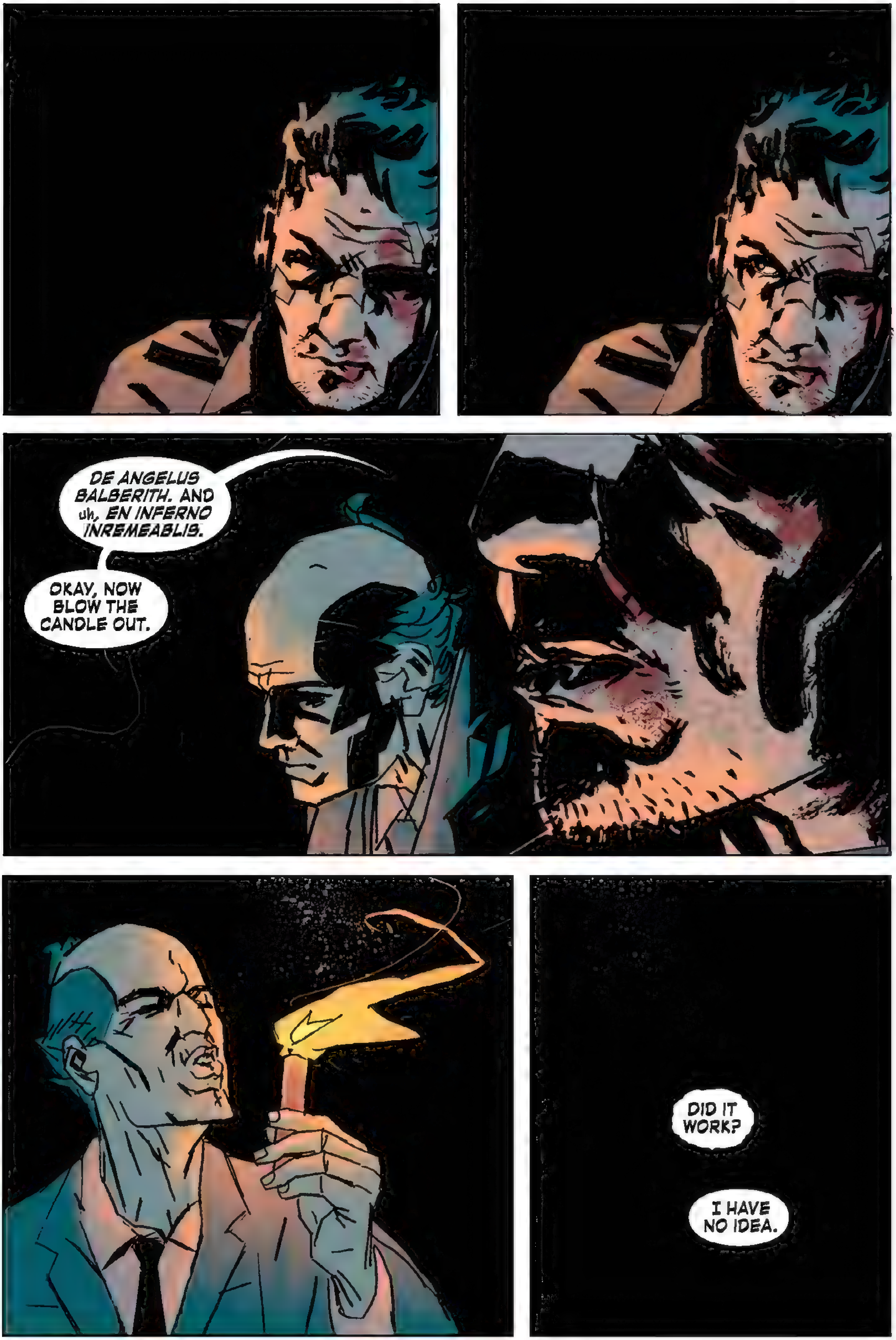

BREAK IT UP!
THANKS.

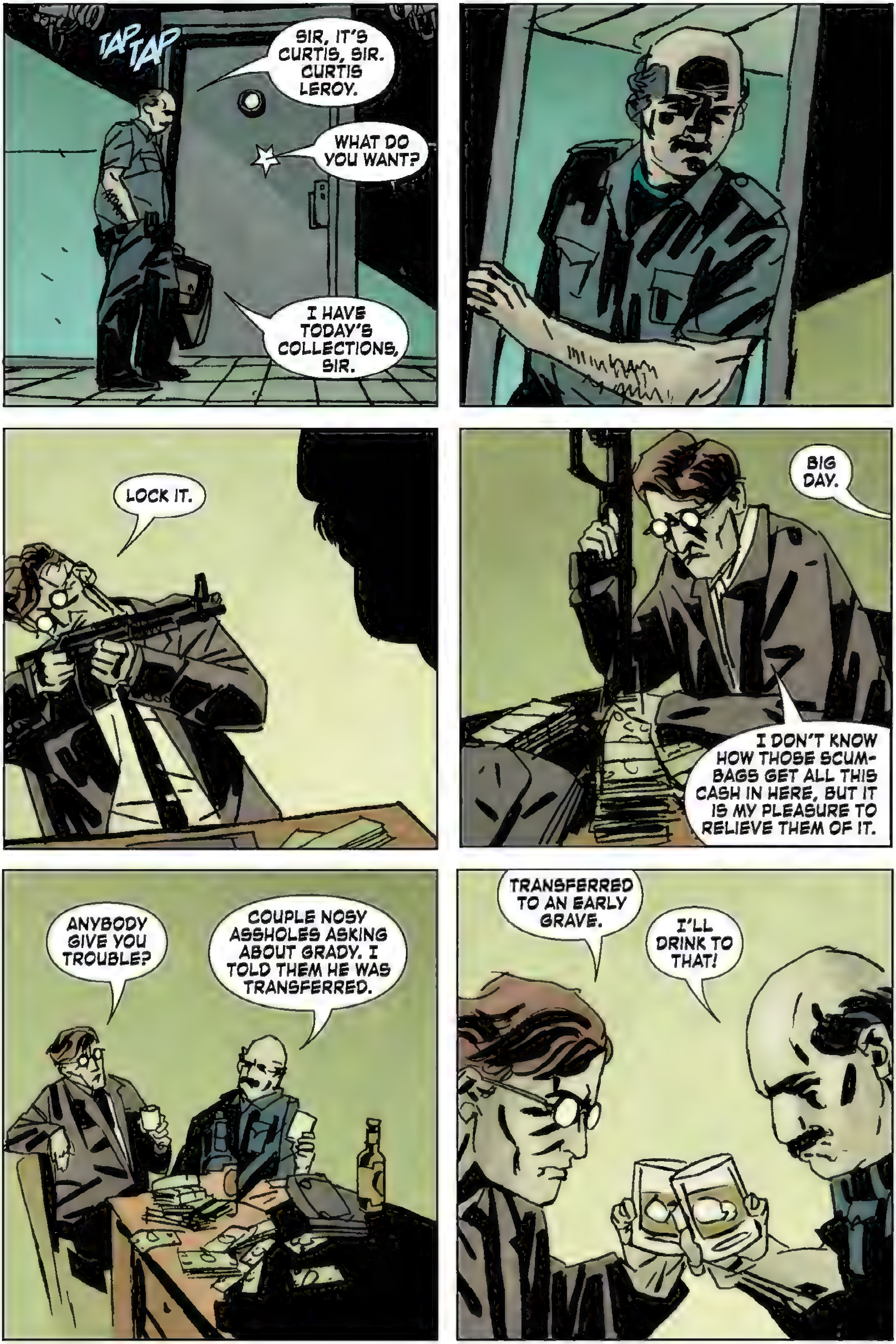

BACK IN THE HOLE, ASSWIPE!
HOME SWEET HOME.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT STUNT WAS, BUT YOU CAN BET YOUR SWEET ASS THE WARDEN IS NOT GOING TO BE HAPPY WHEN HE COMES IN TONIGHT!
I'M SURE THE WARDEN WILL HAVE BIGGER PROBLEMS TONIGHT.
AND SO WILL YOU.

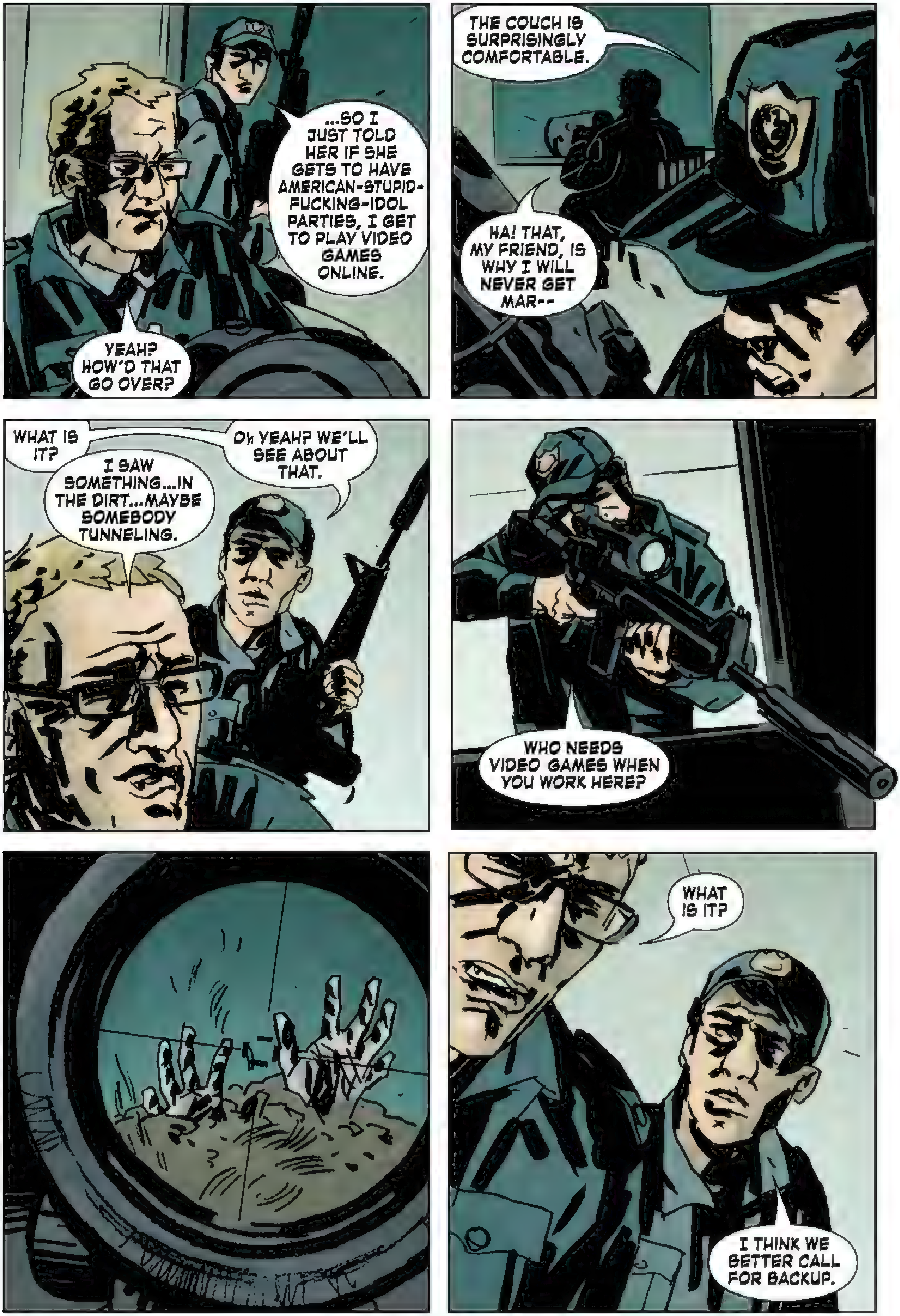

ARE YOU SURE THIS IS WISE?
GAH!
GODDAMMIT, YOU ALMOST GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK.
SORRY.
AND YEAH, I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. I SAW A GUY DO THIS INCANTATION ONCE.
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

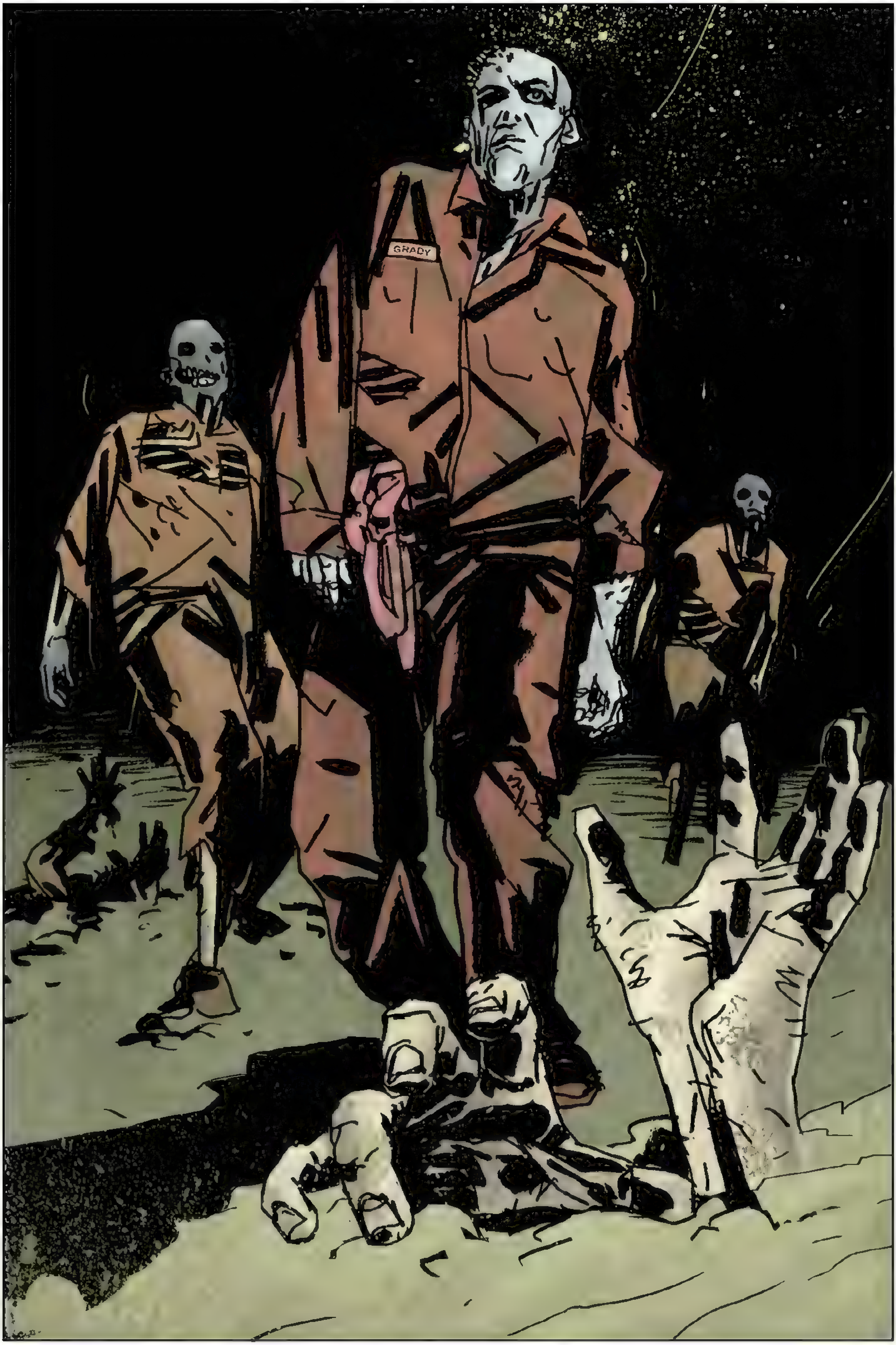

WHO DID YOU FIGHT WITH?
PRETTY MUCH EVERYBODY, I THINK. HOLD THE CANDLE OVER HERE.
WHOSE HAIR IS THAT?
THE WARDEN'S STOOGE, CURTIS.
ARE YOU SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING?
YOU WANNA SHUT UP? I'M TRYING TO CONCENTRATE HERE.
OKAY, NOW LET'S SEE IF I CAN REMEMBER THE INCANTATION. STUPID FUCKING LATIN BULLSHIT.

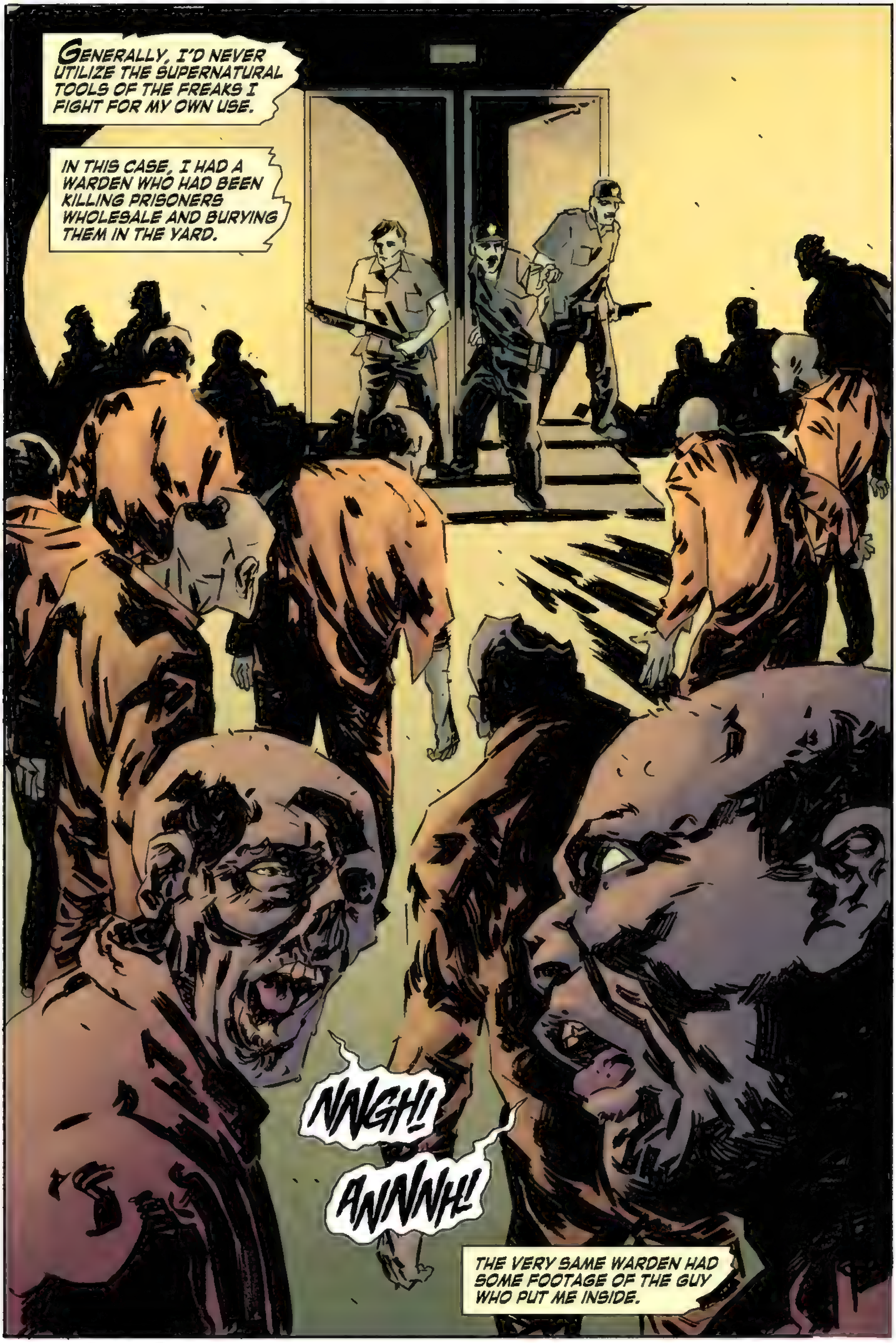

WATCH THAT CANDLE, DEAD BOY. I LET ONE RIP AND THIS WHOLE CELL COULD GO UP.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
SKIP IT.
HIC EN SPIRITUM... uh...SED NON INCORPORE.
I DON'T THINK YOU ARE PRONOUNCING IT PROPERLY.
SO FUCKING HELP ME...
EVOKARE LEMURES DE MORTUIS. DECRETUM ESPUGNARE.
WHAT?
NOTHING.
YOU LAUGHING AT ME?
I NEVER LAUGH.

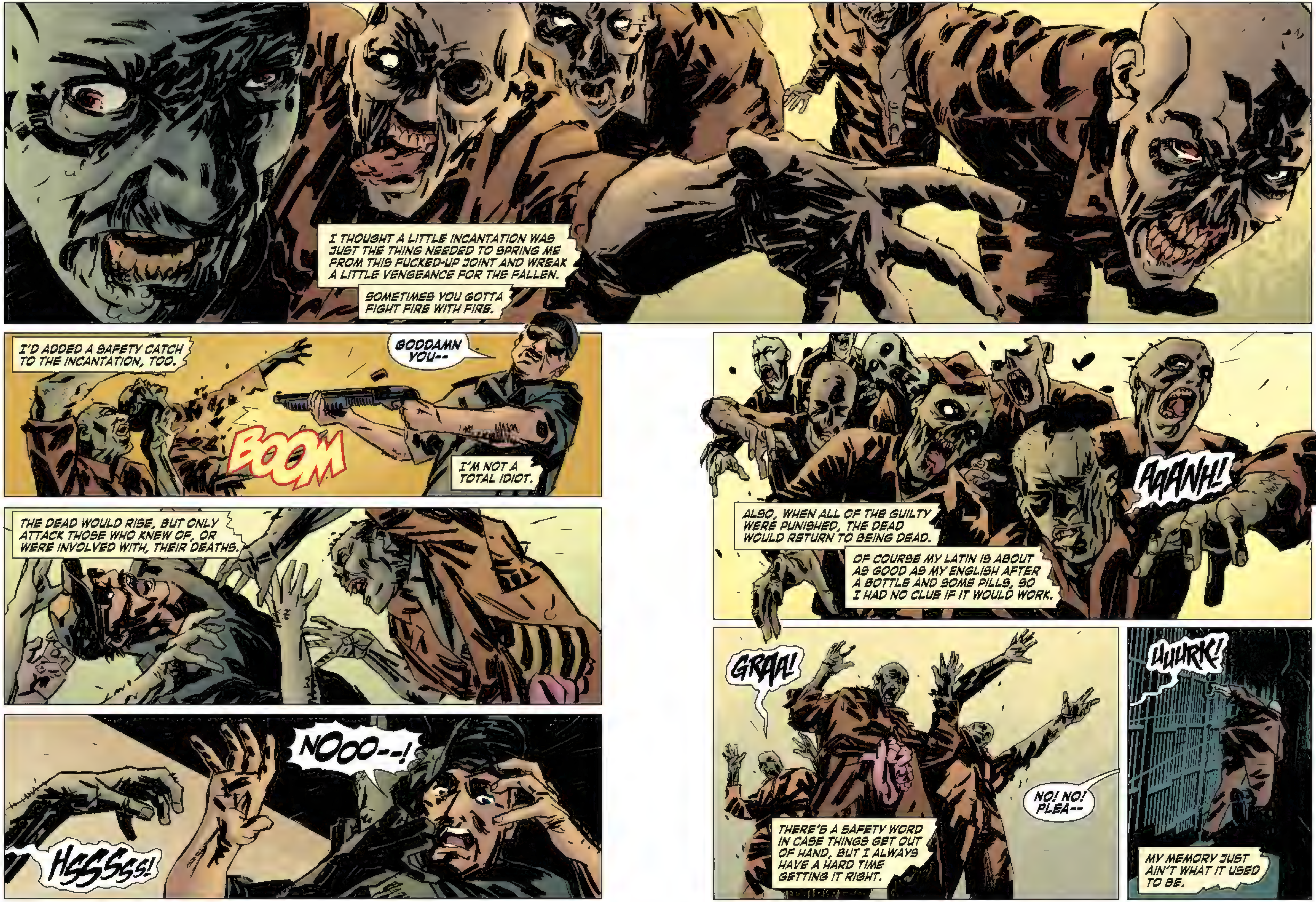

DE ANGELUS BALBERITH. AND uh, EN INFERNO INREMEABLIS.
OKAY, NOW BLOW THE CANDLE OUT.
DID IT WORK?
I HAVE NO IDEA.

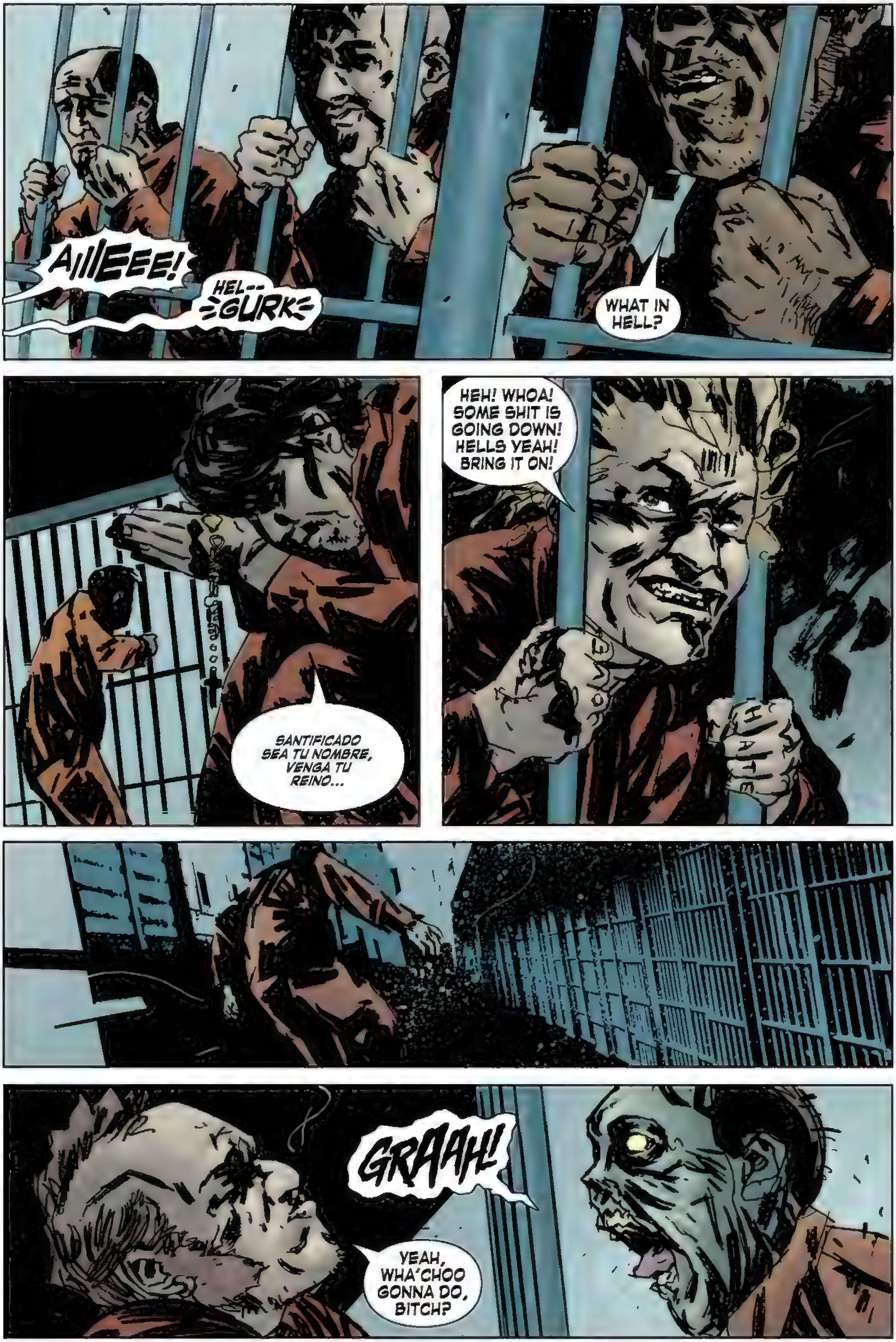

TAP TAP
SIR, IT'S CURTIS, SIR. CURTIS LEROY.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I HAVE TODAY'S COLLECTIONS, SIR.
LOCK IT.
BIG DAY.
I DON'T KNOW HOW THOSE SCUMBAGS GET ALL THIS CASH IN HERE, BUT IT IS MY PLEASURE TO RELIEVE THEM OF IT.
ANYBODY GIVE YOU TROUBLE?
COUPLE NOSY ASSHOLES ASKING ABOUT GRADY. I TOLD THEM HE WAS TRANSFERRED.
TRANSFERRED TO AN EARLY GRAVE.
I'LL DRINK TO THAT!


...SO I JUST TOLD HER IF SHE GETS TO HAVE AMERICAN-STUPID-FUCKING-IDOL PARTIES, I GET TO PLAY VIDEO GAMES ONLINE.
YEAH? HOW'D THAT GO OVER?
THE COUCH IS SURPRISINGLY COMFORTABLE.
HA! THAT, MY FRIEND, IS WHY I WILL NEVER GET MAR--
WHAT IS IT?
OH YEAH? WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.
I SAW SOMETHING...IN THE DIRT...MAYBE SOMEBODY TUNNELING.
WHO NEEDS VIDEO GAMES WHEN YOU WORK HERE?
WHAT IS IT?
I THINK WE BETTER CALL FOR BACKUP.

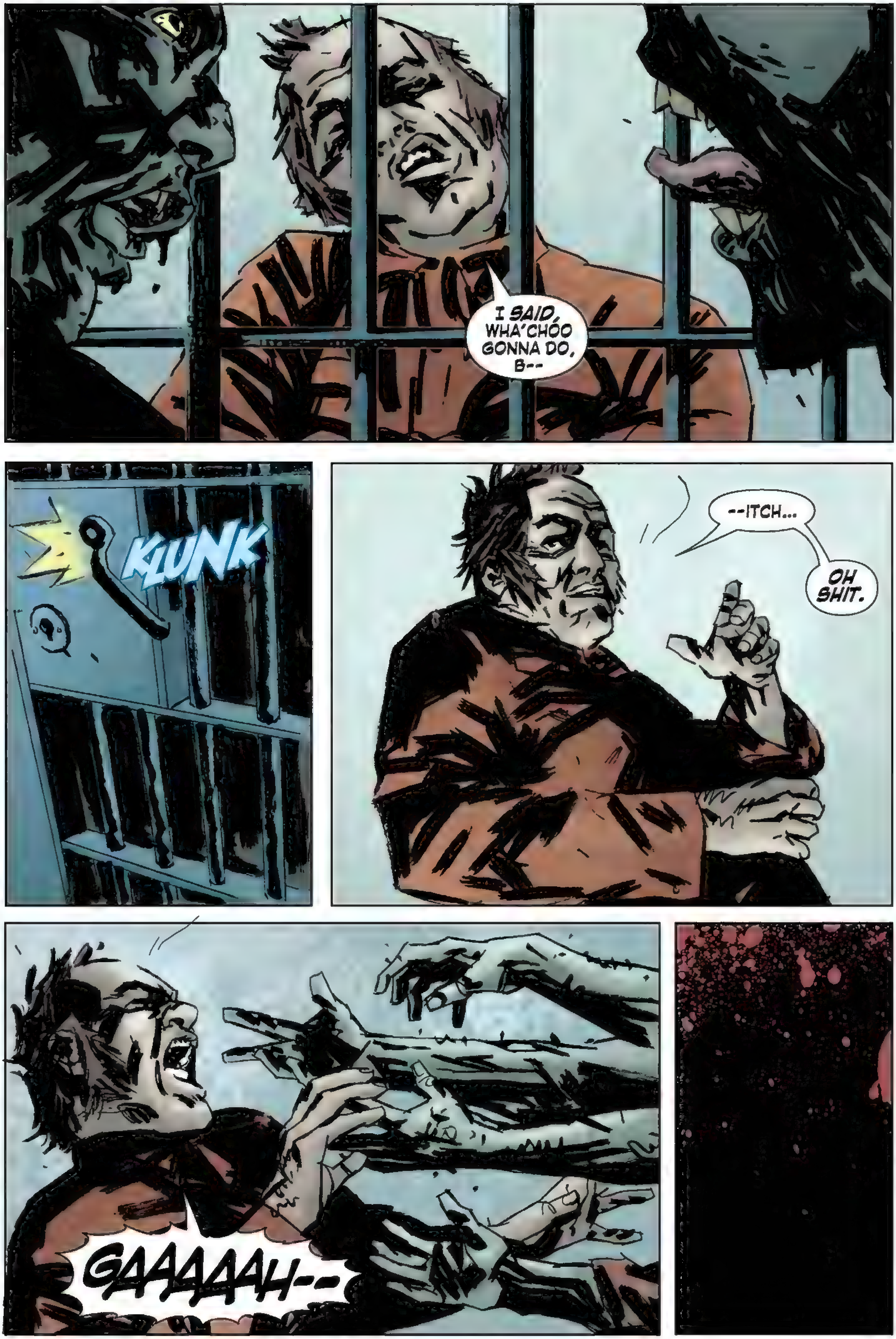

GRADY

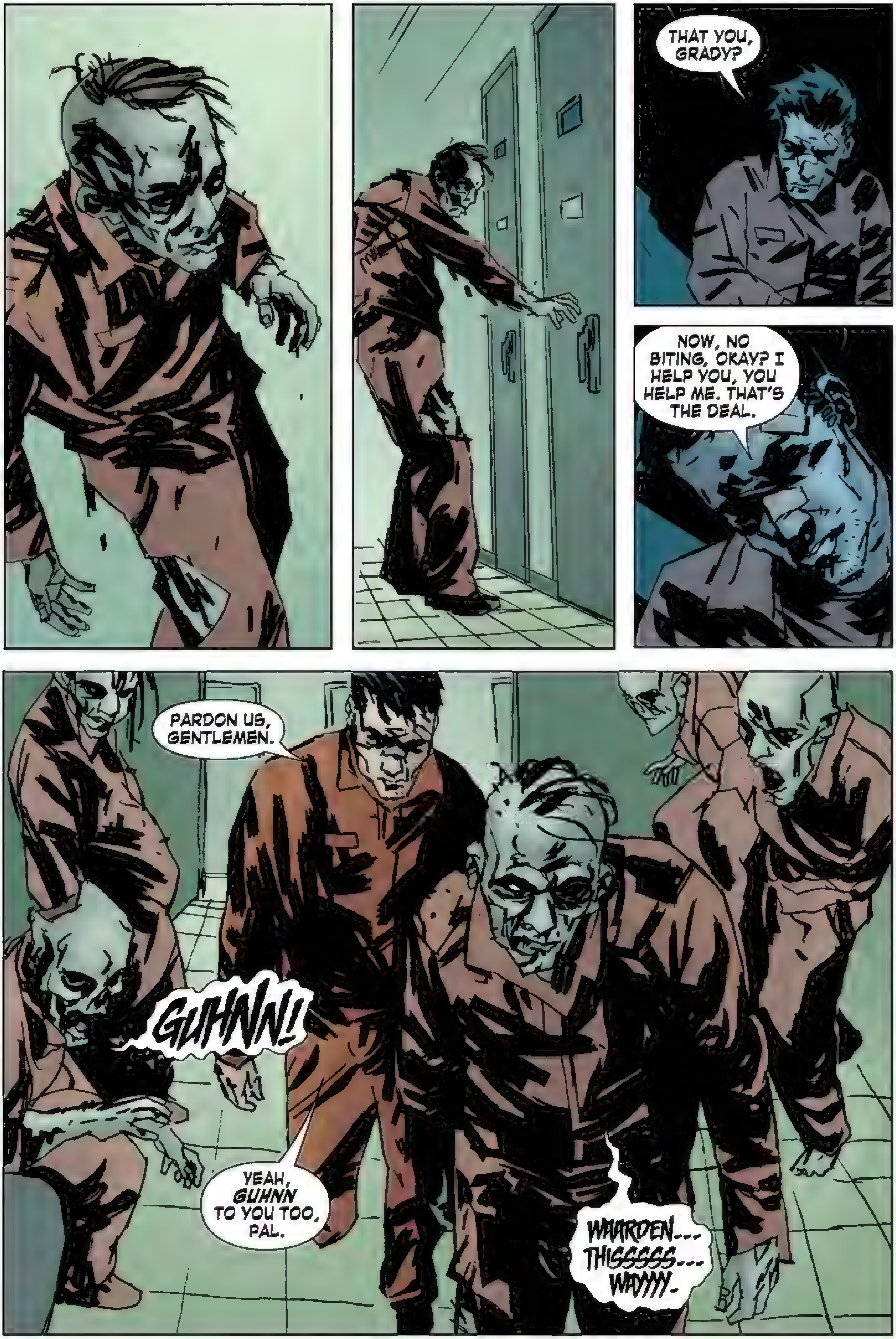

GENERALLY, I'D NEVER UTILIZE THE SUPERNATURAL TOOLS OF THE FREAKS I FIGHT FOR MY OWN USE.
IN THIS CASE, I HAD A WARDEN WHO HAD BEEN KILLING PRISONERS WHOLESALE AND BURYING THEM IN THE YARD.
NNGH!!
ANNNH!!
THE VERY SAME WARDEN HAD SOME FOOTAGE OF THE GUY WHO PUT ME INSIDE.

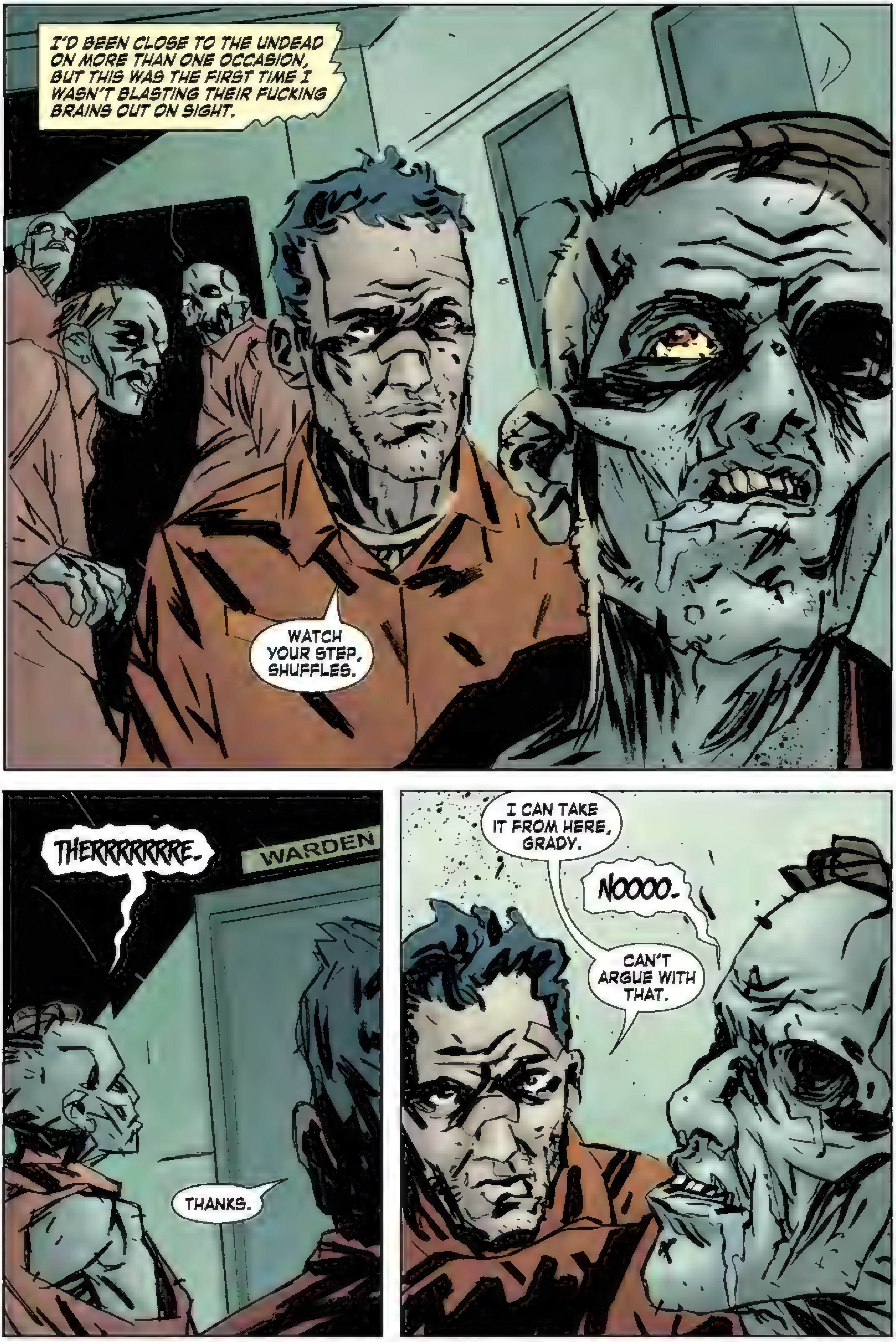

I THOUGHT A LITTLE INCANTATION WAS JUST THE THING NEEDED TO SPRING ME FROM THIS FUCKED-UP JOINT AND WREAK A LITTLE VENGEANCE FOR THE FALLEN.
SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE.
I'D ADDED A SAFETY CATCH TO THE INCANTATION, TOO.
GODDAMN YOU--
BOOM
I'M NOT A TOTAL IDIOT.
THE DEAD WOULD RISE, BUT ONLY ATTACK THOSE WHO KNEW OF, OR WERE INVOLVED WITH, THEIR DEATHS.
NOOO--!
HSSSSS!
AAANH!
ALSO, WHEN ALL OF THE GUILTY WERE PUNISHED, THE DEAD WOULD RETURN TO BEING DEAD.
OF COURSE MY LATIN IS ABOUT AS GOOD AS MY ENGLISH AFTER A BOTTLE AND SOME PILLS, SO I HAD NO CLUE IF IT WOULD WORK.
GRAA!
NO! NO! PLEA--
THERE'S A SAFETY WORD IN CASE THINGS GET OUT OF HAND, BUT I ALWAYS HAVE A HARD TIME GETTING IT RIGHT.
UUURK!
MY MEMORY JUST AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE.

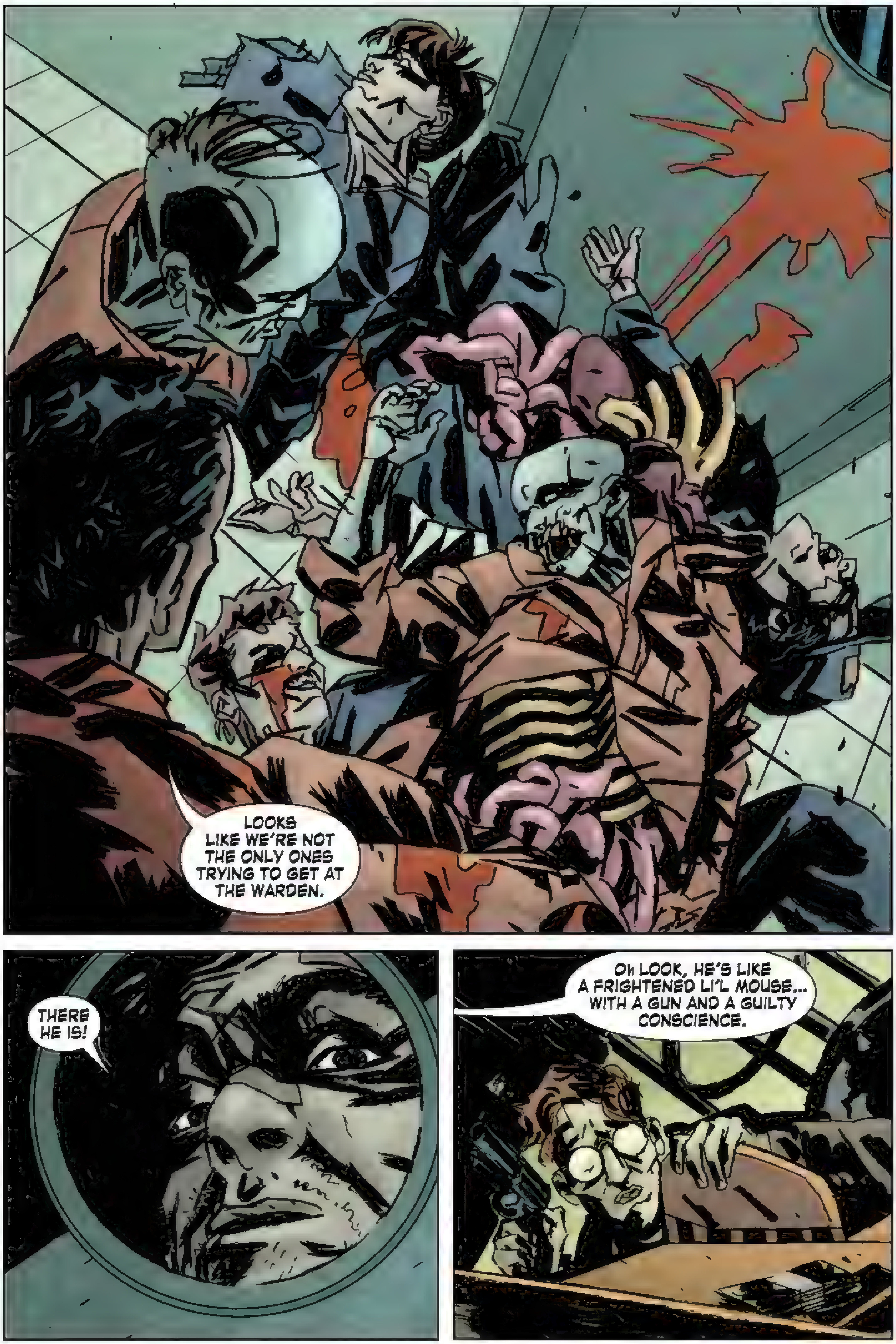

AIIIEEE!
HEL--
GURK
WHAT IN HELL?
SANTIFICADO SEA TU NOMBRE, VENGA TU REINO...
HEH! WHOA! SOME SHIT IS GOING DOWN! HELLS YEAH! BRING IT ON!
GRAAH!
YEAH, WHA'CHOO GONNA DO, BITCH?

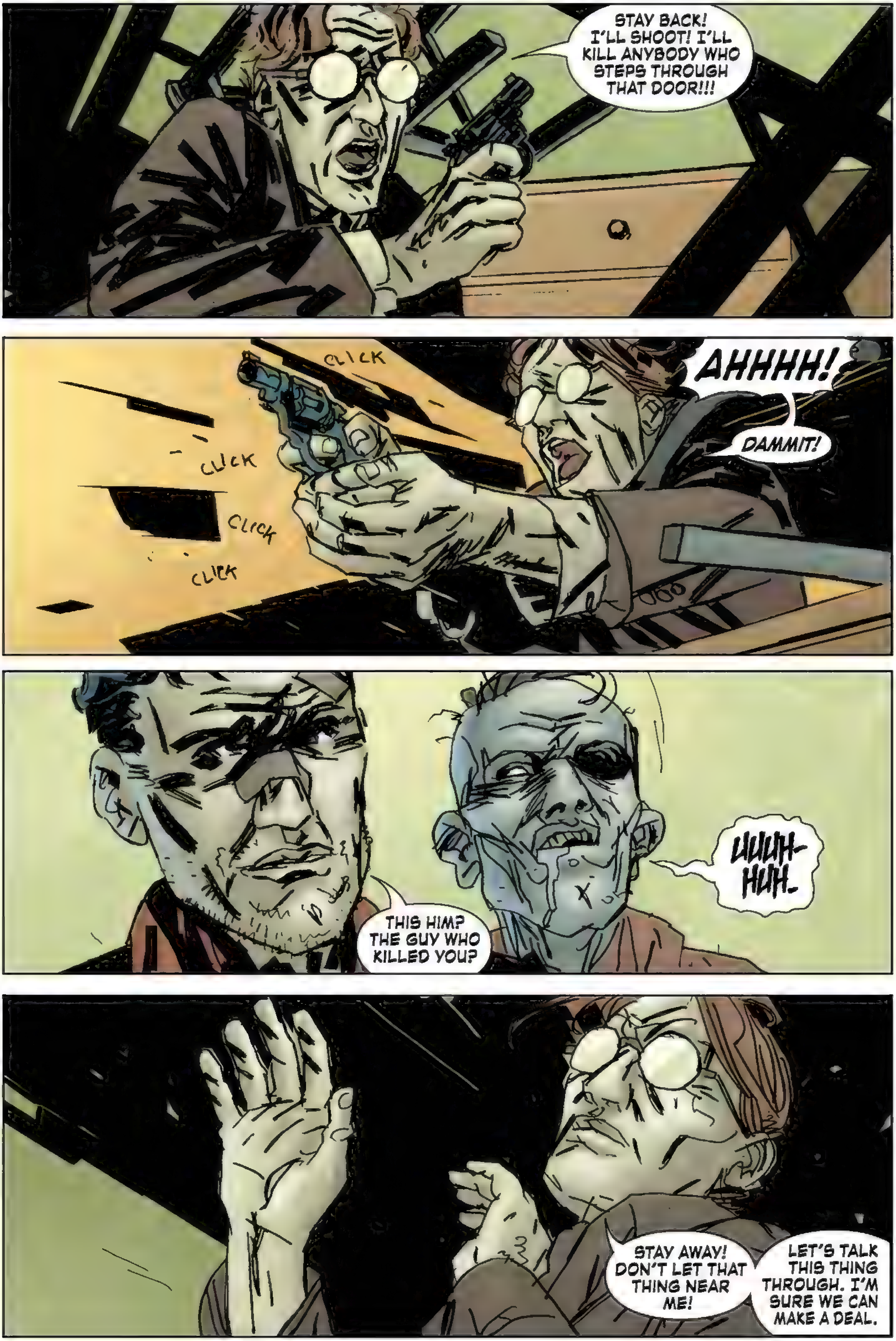
I DON'T KNOW, SIR. THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!
Ah, GOD, THEY'RE IN! *THEY'RE--*
NNG!
AGHHHH!
OH GOD, OH GOD, HELP M--
HSSS!

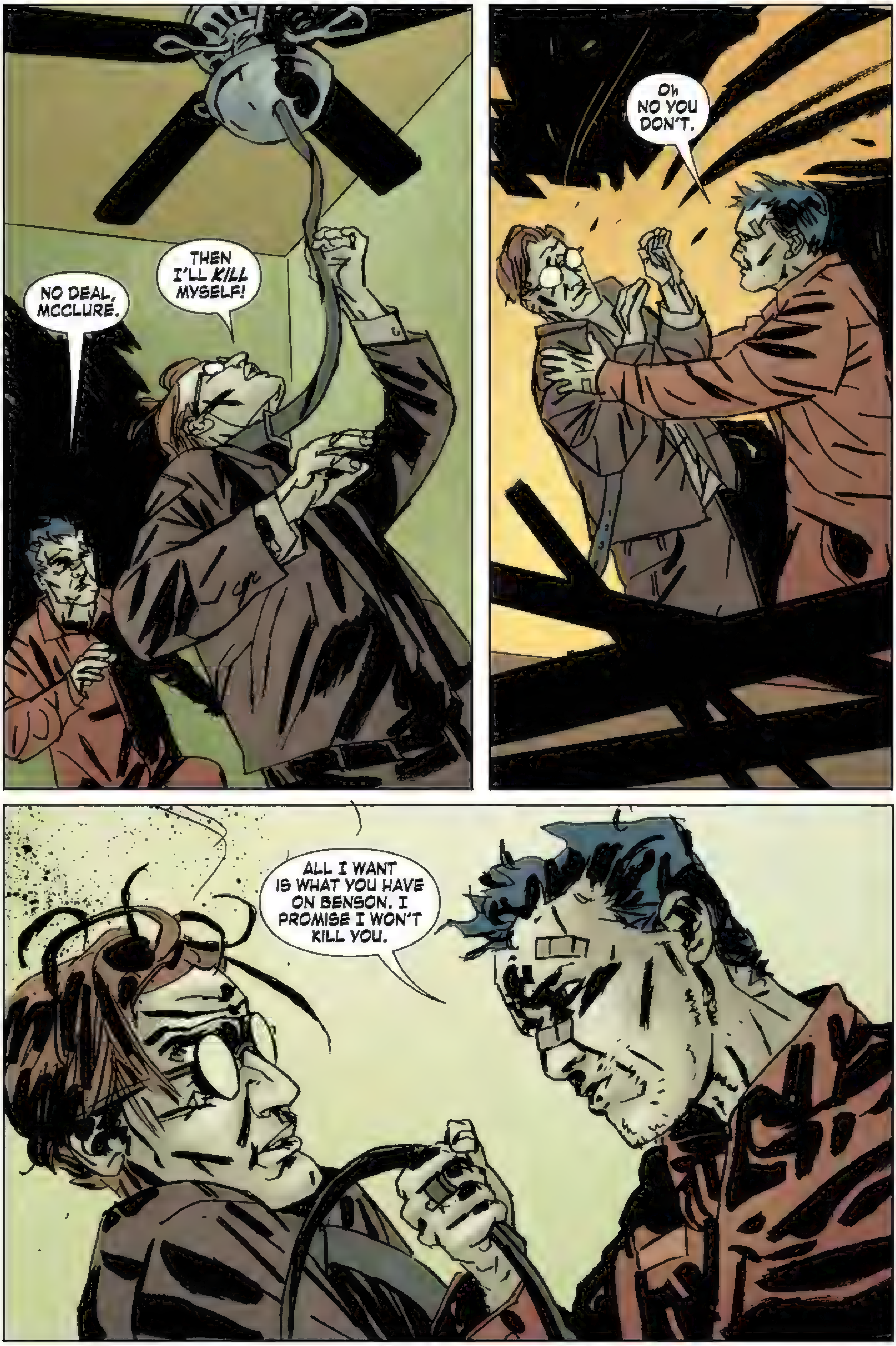

I SAID, WHA'CHOO GONNA DO, B--
KLUNK
--ITCH...
OH SHIT.
GAAAAAH--

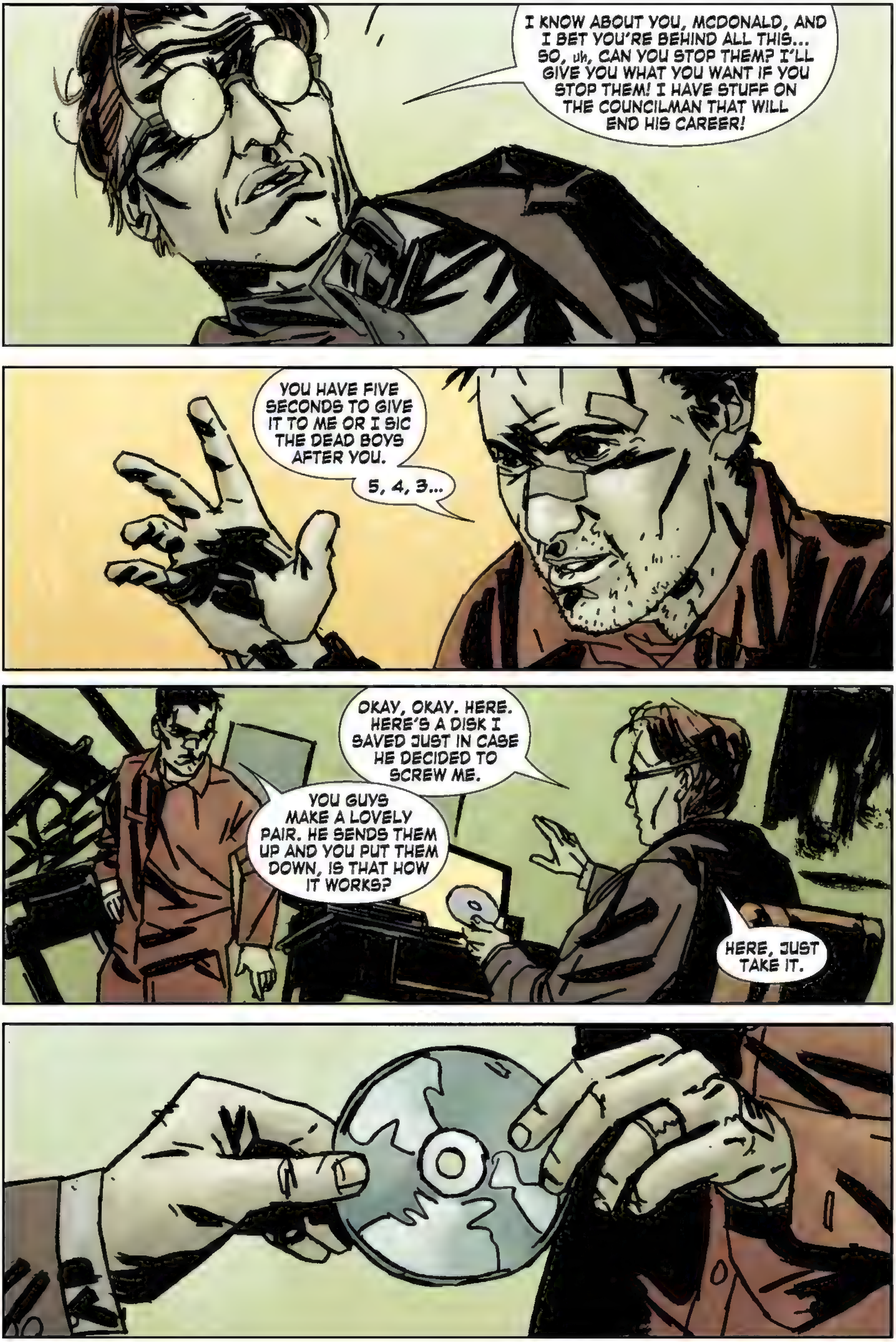

THAT YOU, GRADY?
NOW, NO BITING, OKAY? I HELP YOU, YOU HELP ME. THAT'S THE DEAL.
PARDON US, GENTLEMEN.
GUHNN!
YEAH, *GUHNN* TO YOU TOO, PAL.
WAARDEN... THISSSSS... WAYYY.

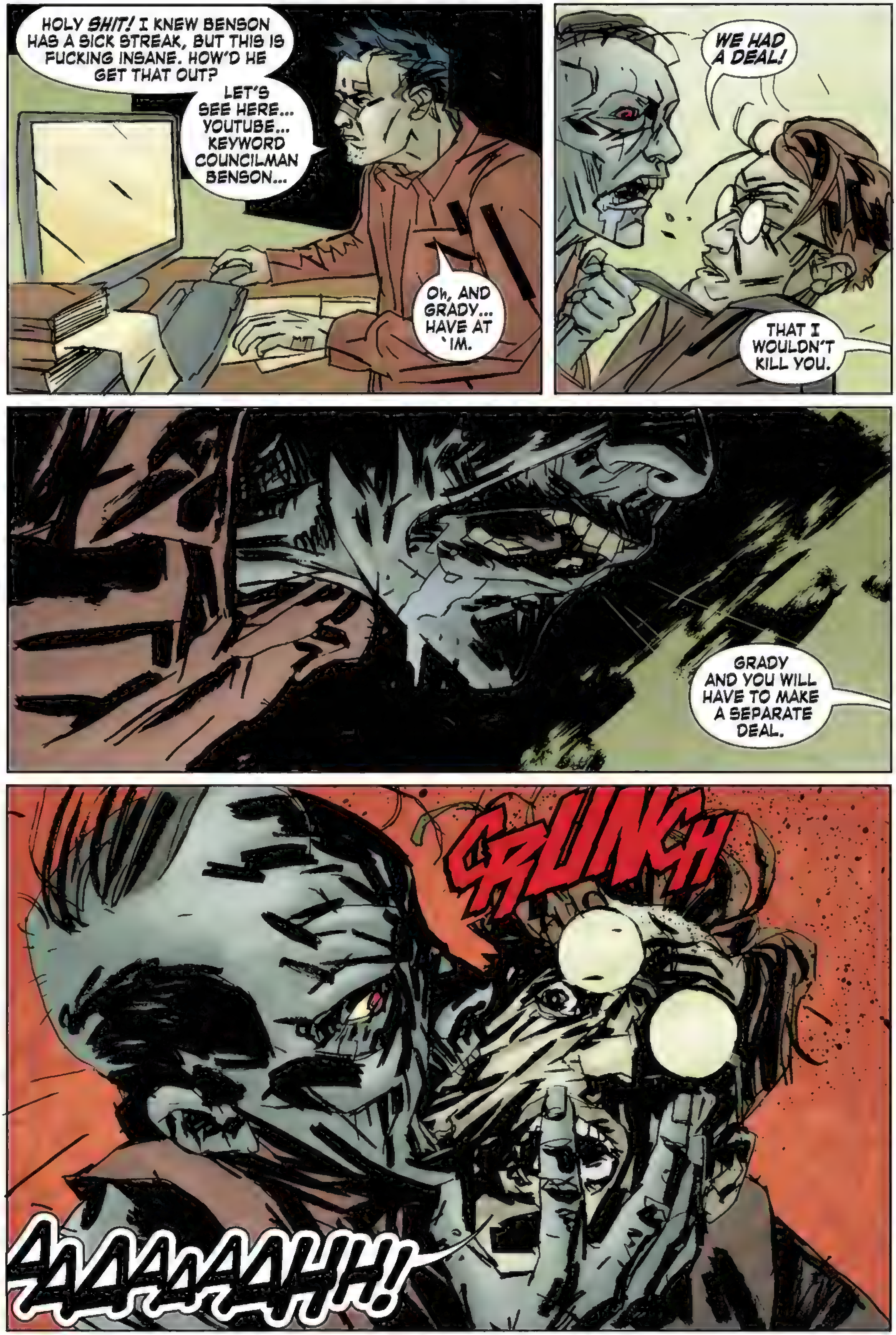

I'D BEEN CLOSE TO THE UNDEAD ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION, BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I WASN'T BLASTING THEIR FUCKING BRAINS OUT ON SIGHT.
WATCH YOUR STEP, SHUFFLES.
THERRRRRRRE.
WARDEN
THANKS.
I CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE, GRADY.
NOOOO.
CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT.

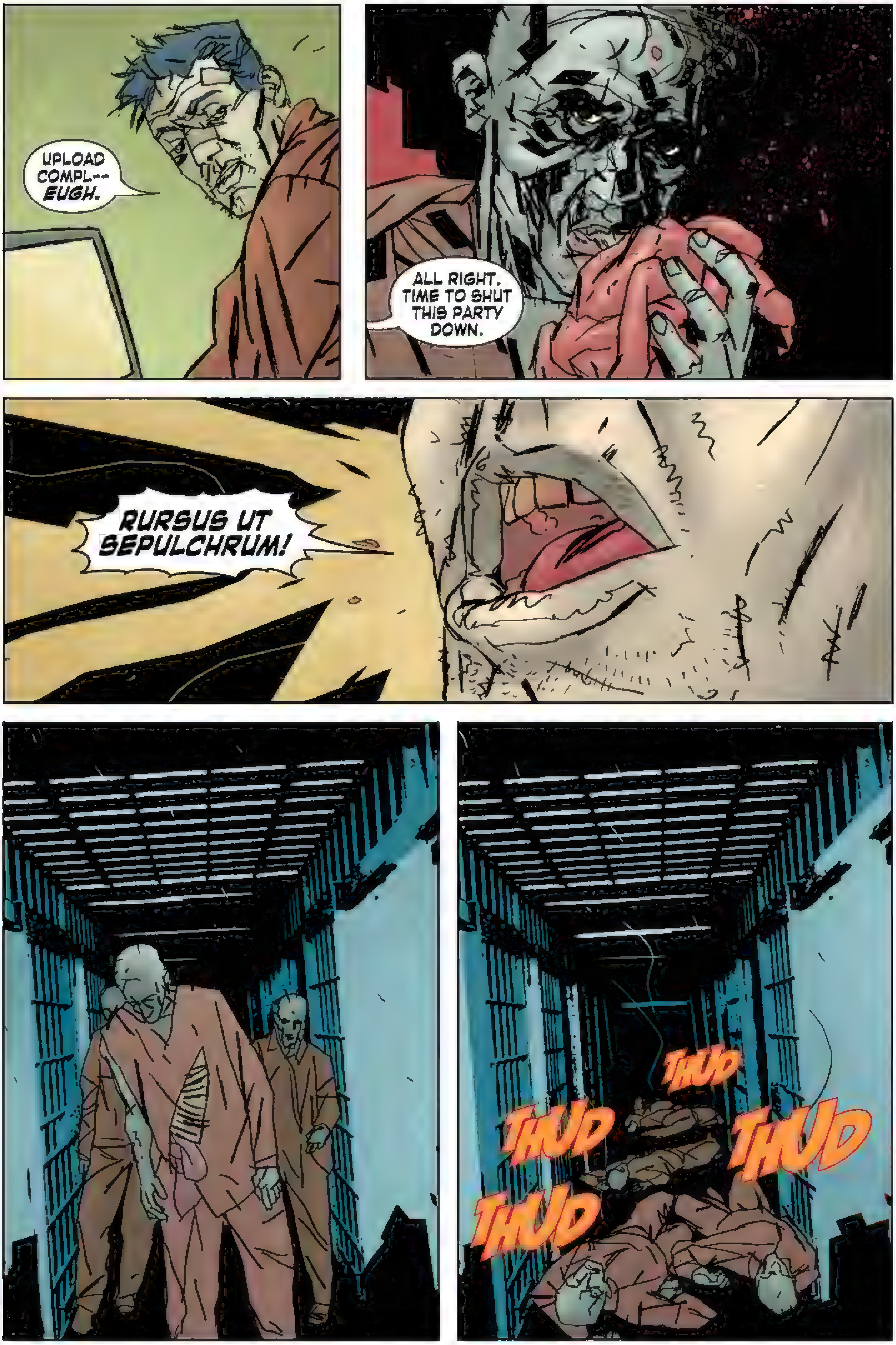

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES TRYING TO GET AT THE WARDEN.
THERE HE IS!
Oh LOOK, HE'S LIKE A FRIGHTENED LI'L MOUSE... WITH A GUN AND A GUILTY CONSCIENCE.

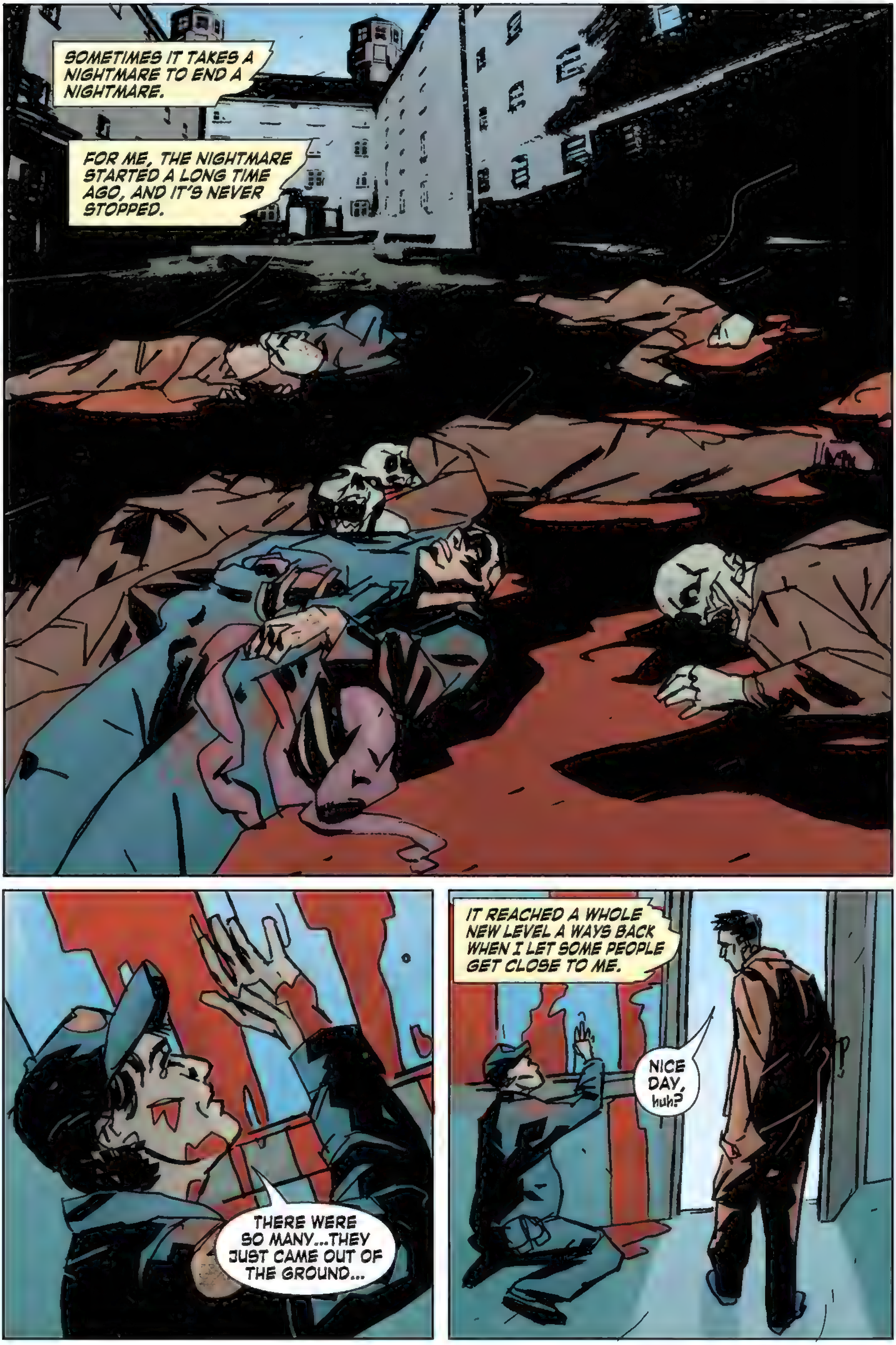

STAY BACK! I'LL SHOOT! I'LL KILL ANYBODY WHO STEPS THROUGH THAT DOOR!!!
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
AHHHH!
DAMMIT!
THIS HIM? THE GUY WHO KILLED YOU?
UUUH-HUH.
STAY AWAY! DON'T LET THAT THING NEAR ME!
LET'S TALK THIS THING THROUGH. I'M SURE WE CAN MAKE A DEAL.


THEN I'LL *KILL* MYSELF!
NO DEAL, MCCLURE.
Oh NO YOU DON'T.
ALL I WANT IS WHAT YOU HAVE ON BENSON. I PROMISE I WON'T KILL YOU.


I KNOW ABOUT YOU, MCDONALD, AND I BET YOU'RE BEHIND ALL THIS... SO, uh, CAN YOU STOP THEM? I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT IF YOU STOP THEM! I HAVE STUFF ON THE COUNCILMAN THAT WILL END HIS CAREER!
YOU HAVE FIVE SECONDS TO GIVE IT TO ME OR I SIC THE DEAD BOYS AFTER YOU.
5, 4, 3...
OKAY, OKAY. HERE. HERE'S A DISK I SAVED JUST IN CASE HE DECIDED TO SCREW ME.
YOU GUYS MAKE A LOVELY PAIR. HE SENDS THEM UP AND YOU PUT THEM DOWN, IS THAT HOW IT WORKS?
HERE, JUST TAKE IT.

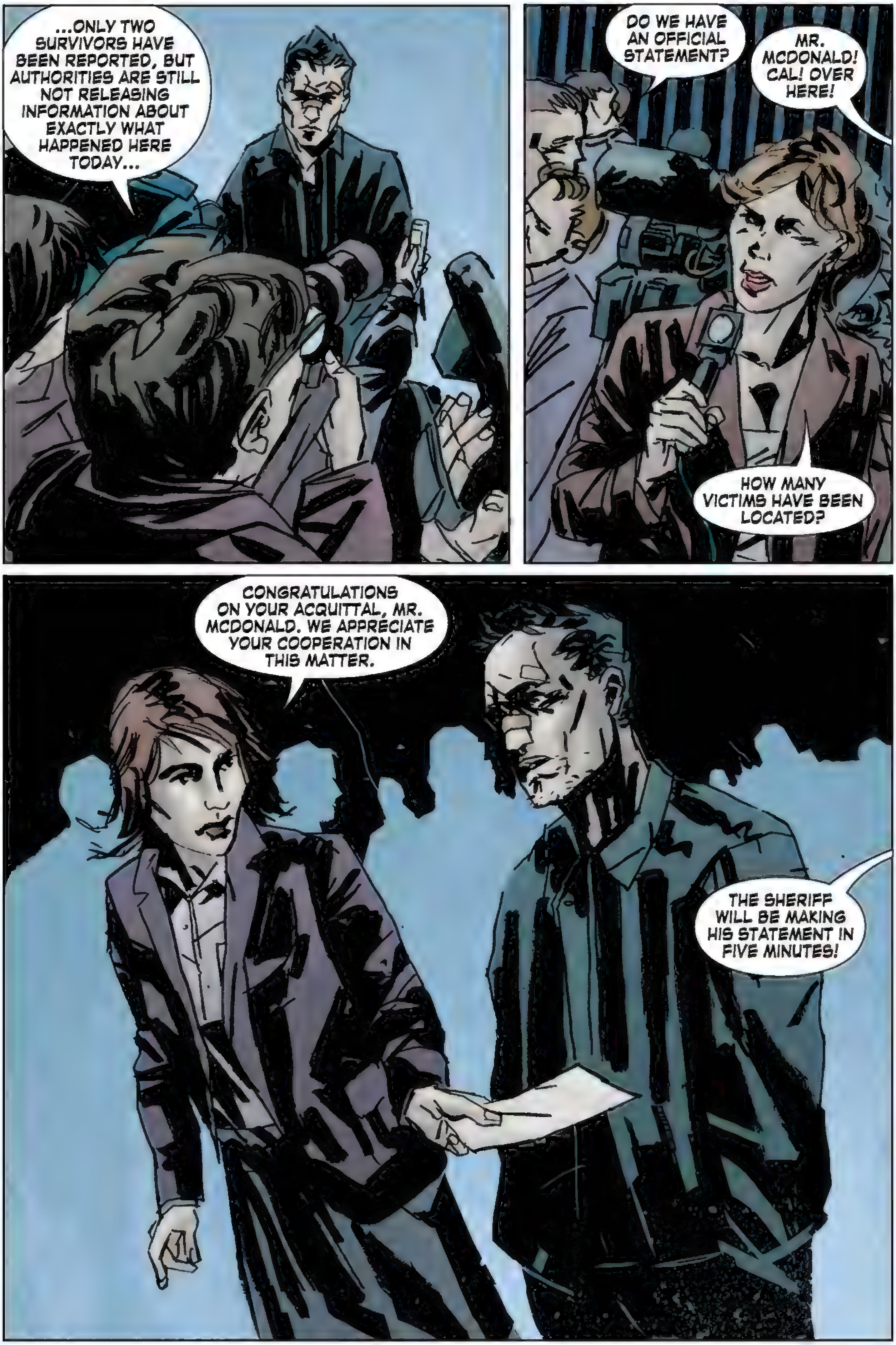

HOLY *SHIT!* I KNEW BENSON HAS A SICK STREAK, BUT THIS IS FUCKING INSANE. HOW'D HE GET THAT OUT?
LET'S SEE HERE... YOUTUBE... KEYWORD COUNCILMAN BENSON...
Oh, AND GRADY... HAVE AT 'IM.
WE HAD A DEAL!
THAT I WOULDN'T KILL YOU.
GRADY AND YOU WILL HAVE TO MAKE A SEPARATE DEAL.
CRUNCH
AAAAAAAHH!

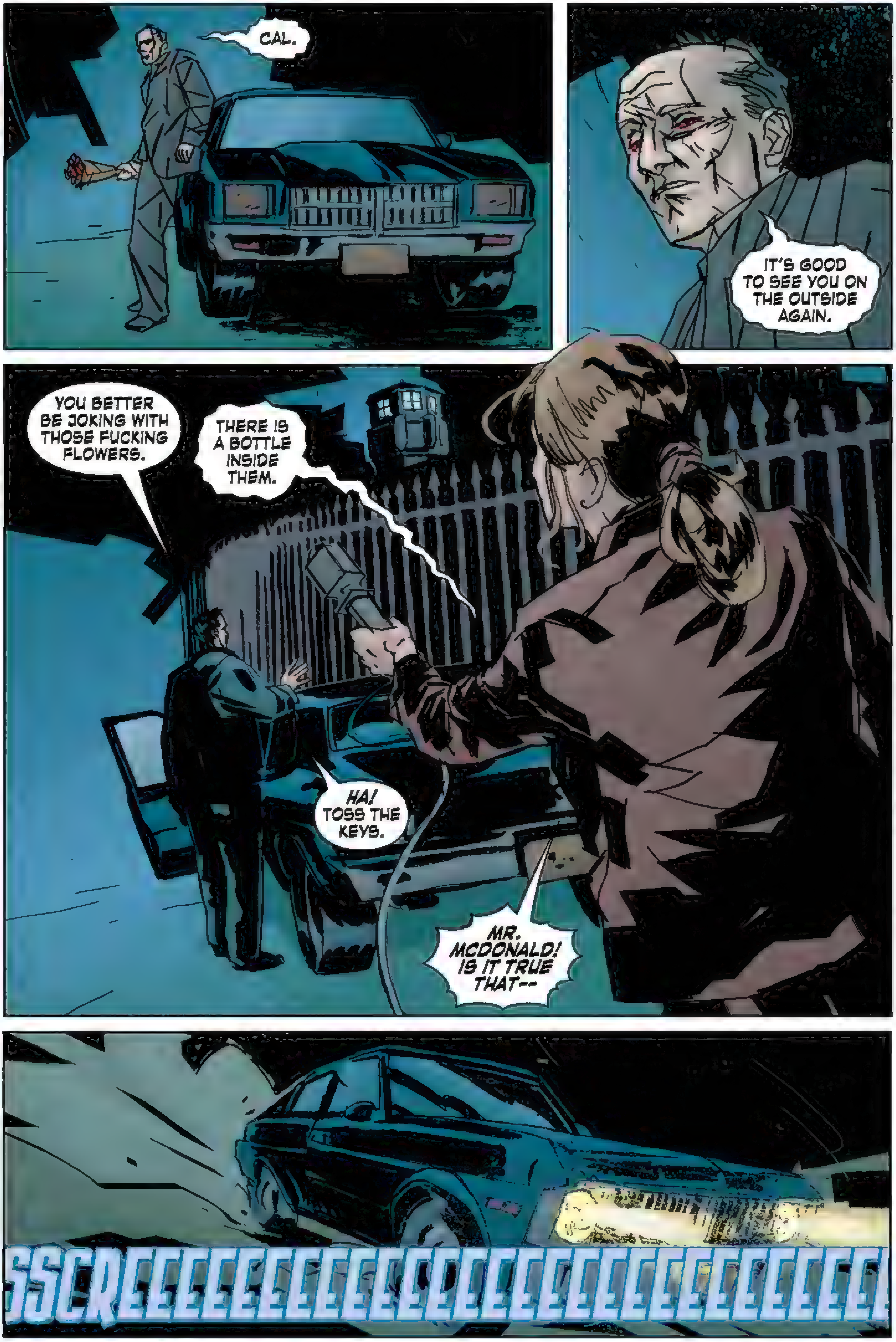

UPLOAD COMPL-- *EUGH.*
ALL RIGHT. TIME TO SHUT THIS PARTY DOWN.
RURSUS UT SEPULCHRUM!
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD

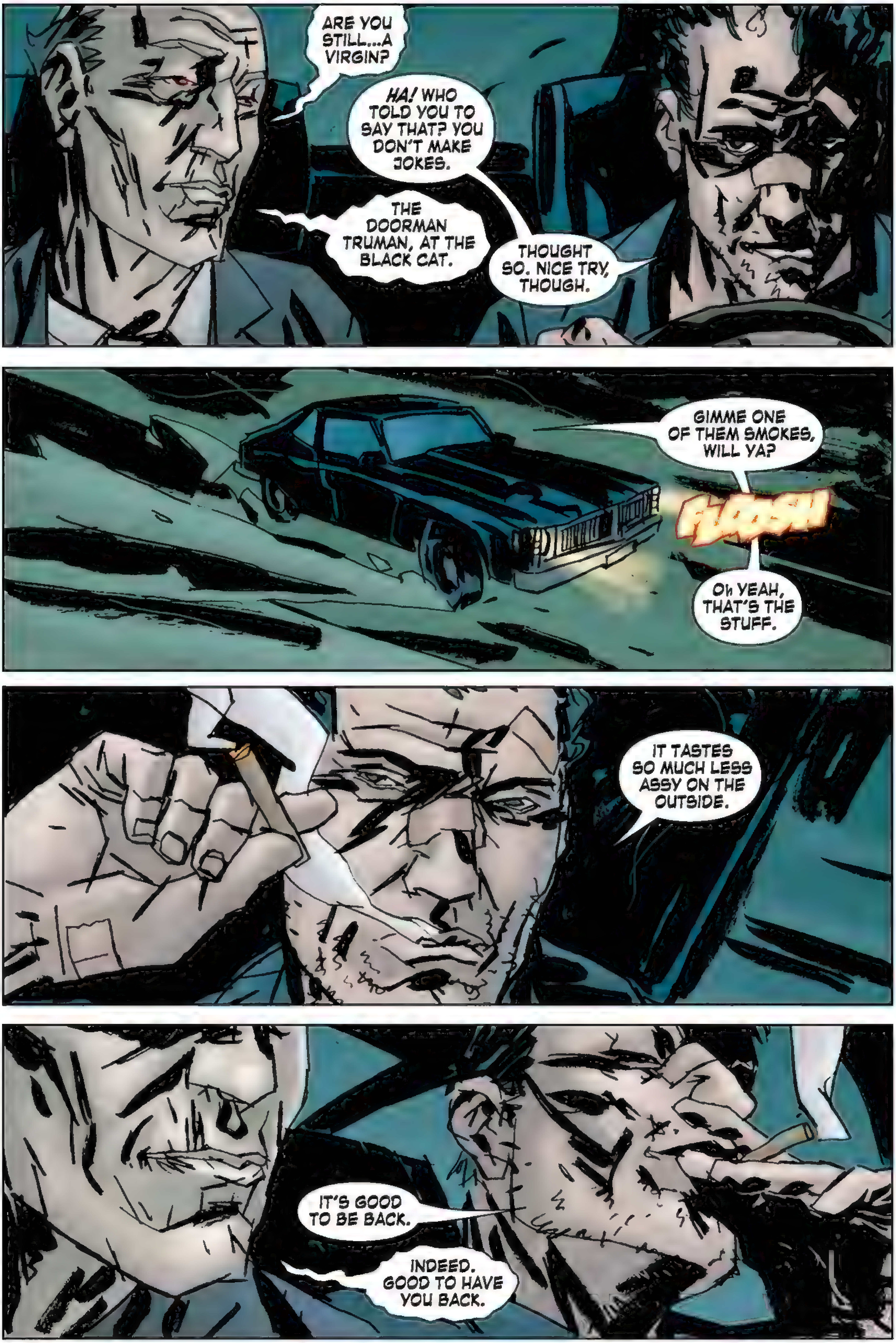

SOMETIMES IT TAKES A NIGHTMARE TO END A NIGHTMARE.
FOR ME, THE NIGHTMARE STARTED A LONG TIME AGO, AND IT'S NEVER STOPPED.
THERE WERE SO MANY...THEY JUST CAME OUT OF THE GROUND...
IT REACHED A WHOLE NEW LEVEL A WAYS BACK WHEN I LET SOME PEOPLE GET CLOSE TO ME.
NICE DAY, huh?

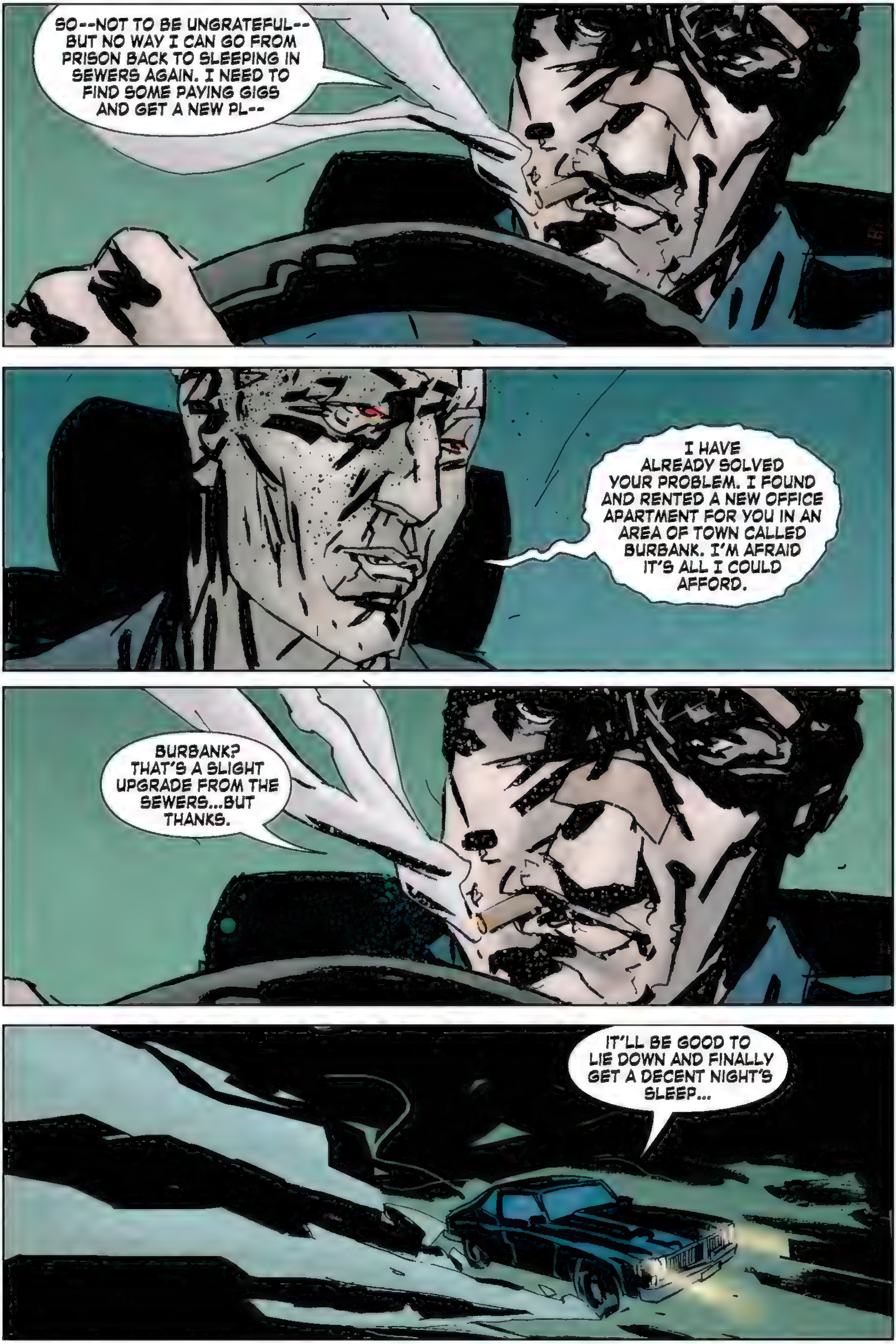
THEY'RE ALL DEAD NOW.
IN AN ODD SORT OF WAY I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING IS FINALLY OVER. MAYBE NOT THE NIGHTMARE THAT I CALL MY LIFE, BUT AT LEAST ONE OF THE WORST CHAPTERS OF IT.

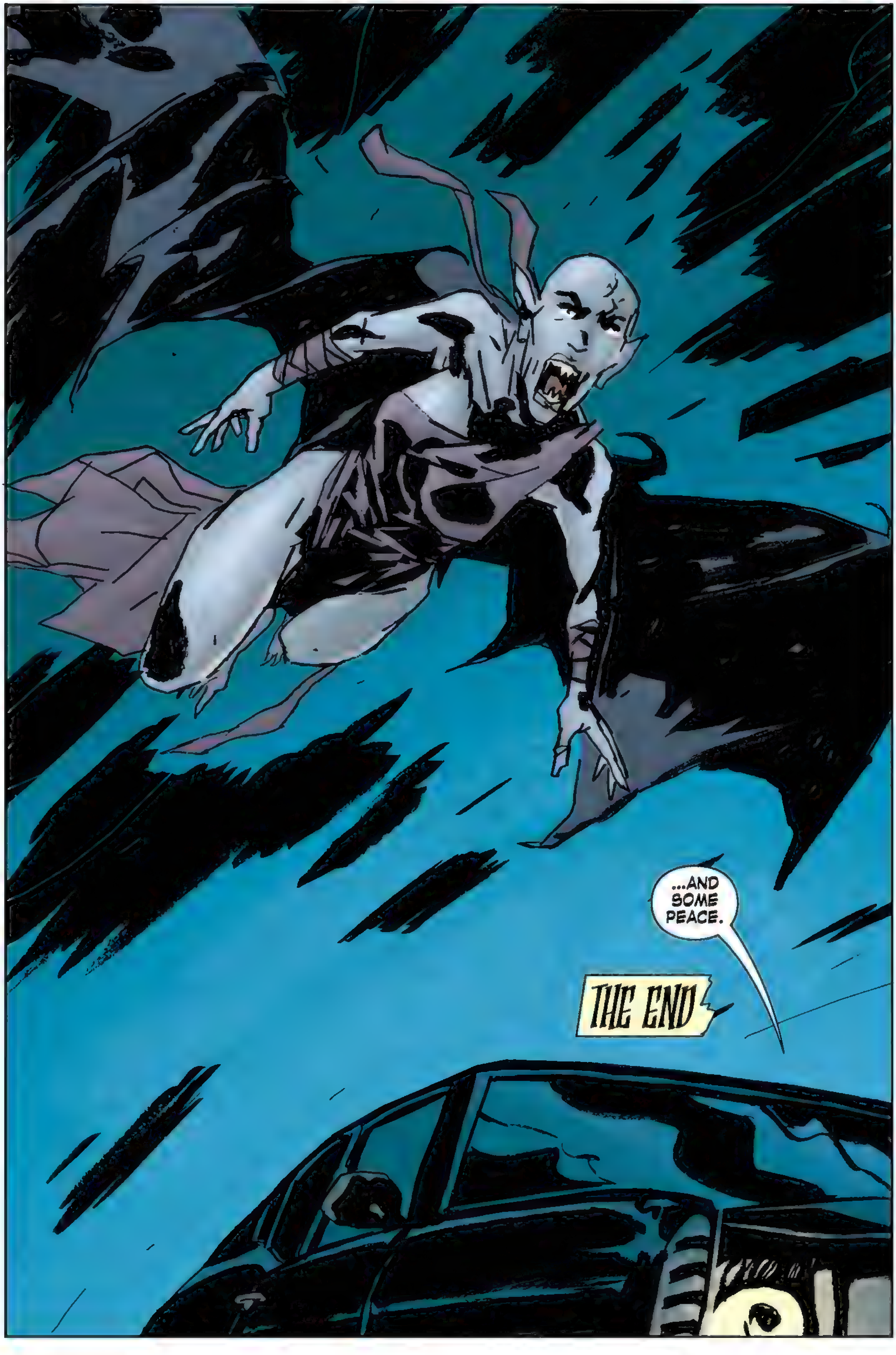
LATER THAT DAY.
THEY WEREN'T HAPPY ABOUT IT, BUT THEY HAD TO LET ME GO. ONCE THE PUBLIC GOT A LOOK AT THE COUNCILMAN'S HOME VIDEOS, NOTHING HE DID STUCK.
I COULDN'T WAIT TO SEE HOW THEY EXPLAINED AWAY ALL THE DEATHS IN THE PRISON AND THE UNEARTHED GRAVES.
I WAS LET GO WITHOUT CEREMONY. THEY ASKED THAT I NOT SAY ANYTHING TO THE MEDIA.
MR. MCDONALD! CAL! TELL US WHAT HAPPENED.
NO COMMENT.
I PLAYED ALONG.

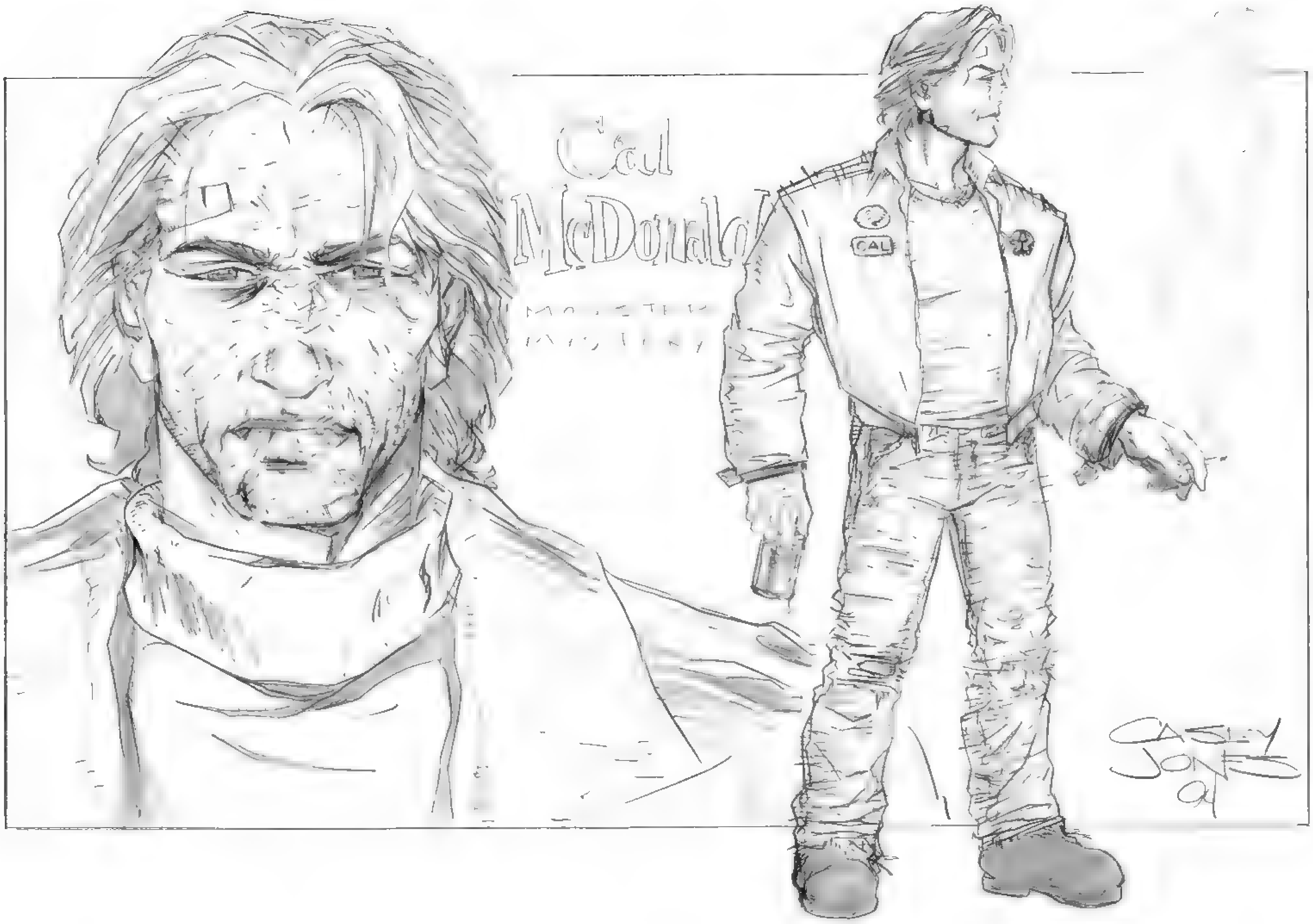

...ONLY TWO SURVIVORS HAVE BEEN REPORTED, BUT AUTHORITIES ARE STILL NOT RELEASING INFORMATION ABOUT EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED HERE TODAY...
DO WE HAVE AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT?
MR. MCDONALD! CAL! OVER HERE!
HOW MANY VICTIMS HAVE BEEN LOCATED?
CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ACQUITTAL, MR. MCDONALD. WE APPRECIATE YOUR COOPERATION IN THIS MATTER.
THE SHERIFF WILL BE MAKING HIS STATEMENT IN FIVE MINUTES!


CAL.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU ON THE OUTSIDE AGAIN.
YOU BETTER BE JOKING WITH THOSE FUCKING FLOWERS.
THERE IS A BOTTLE INSIDE THEM.
HA! TOSS THE KEYS.
MR. MCDONALD! IS IT TRUE THAT--
SSCREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

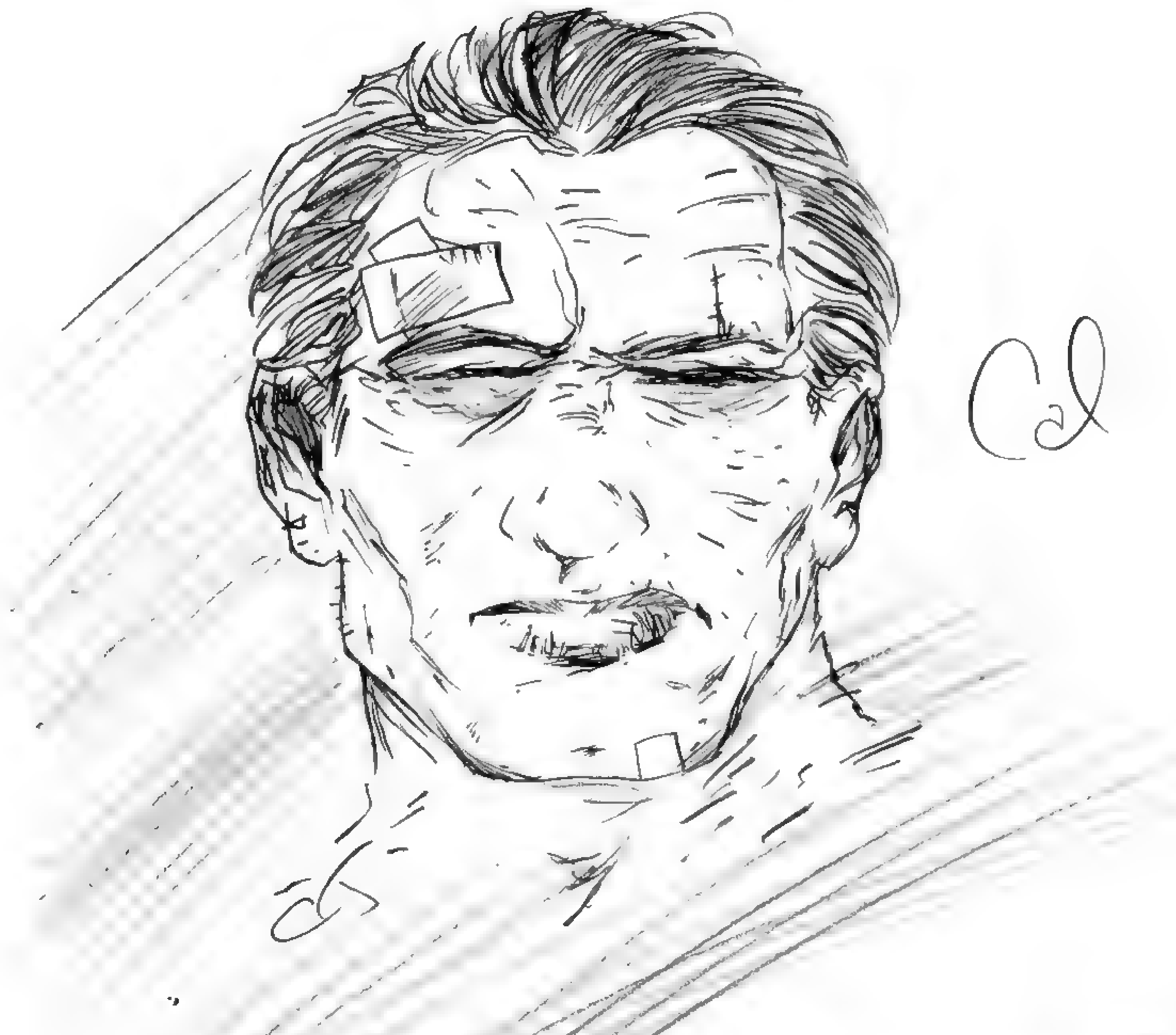

ARE YOU STILL...A VIRGIN?
HA! WHO TOLD YOU TO SAY THAT? YOU DON'T MAKE JOKES.
THE DOORMAN TRUMAN, AT THE BLACK CAT.
THOUGHT SO. NICE TRY, THOUGH.
GIMME ONE OF THEM SMOKES, WILL YA?
FLOOSH
Oh YEAH, THAT'S THE STUFF.
IT TASTES SO MUCH LESS ASSY ON THE OUTSIDE.
IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK.
INDEED. GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.

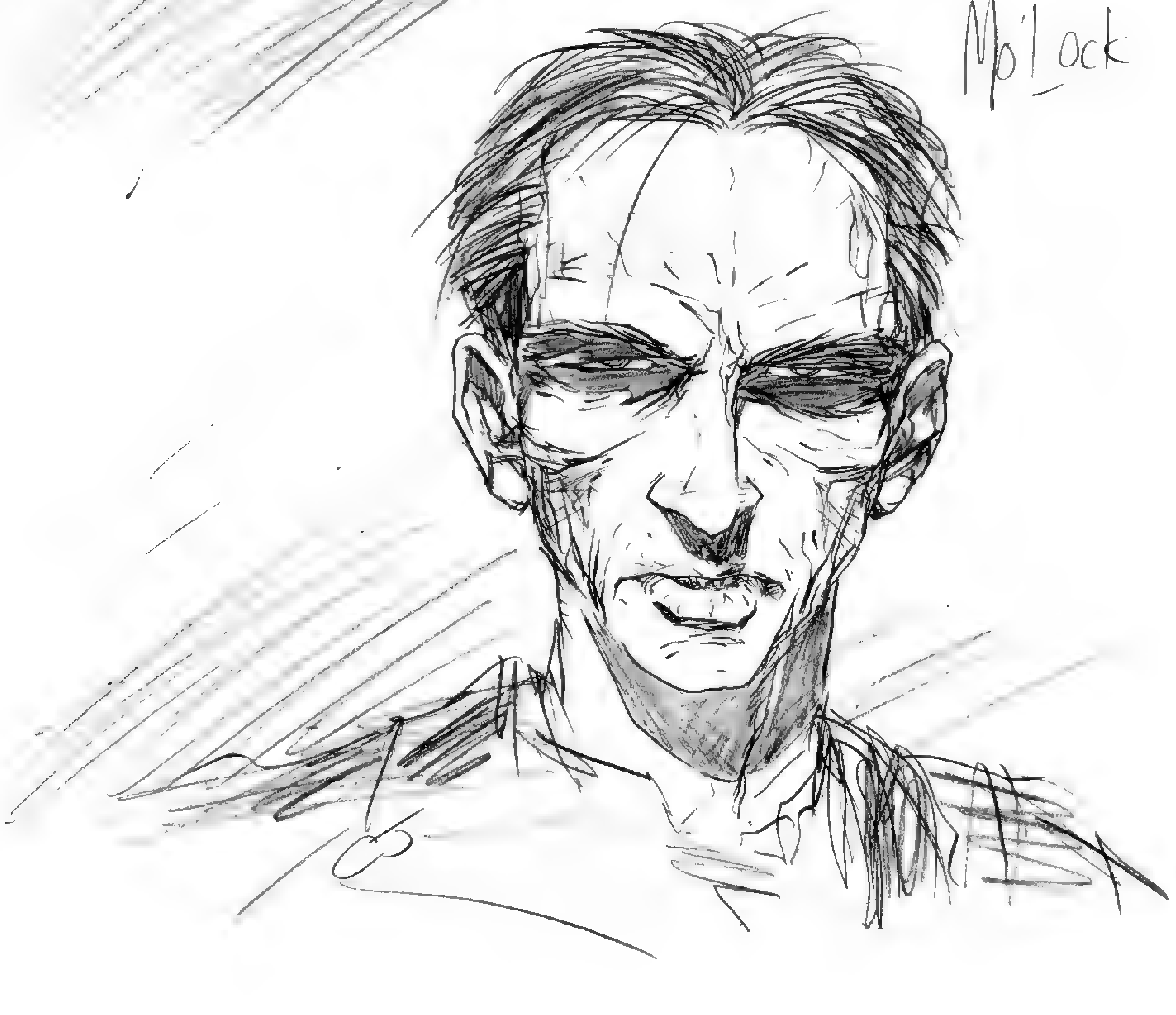

SO--NOT TO BE UNGRATEFUL--BUT NO WAY I CAN GO FROM PRISON BACK TO SLEEPING IN SEWERS AGAIN. I NEED TO FIND SOME PAYING GIGS AND GET A NEW PL--
I HAVE ALREADY SOLVED YOUR PROBLEM. I FOUND AND RENTED A NEW OFFICE APARTMENT FOR YOU IN AN AREA OF TOWN CALLED BURBANK. I'M AFRAID IT'S ALL I COULD AFFORD.
BURBANK? THAT'S A SLIGHT UPGRADE FROM THE SEWERS...BUT THANKS.
IT'LL BE GOOD TO LIE DOWN AND FINALLY GET A DECENT NIGHT'S SLEEP...

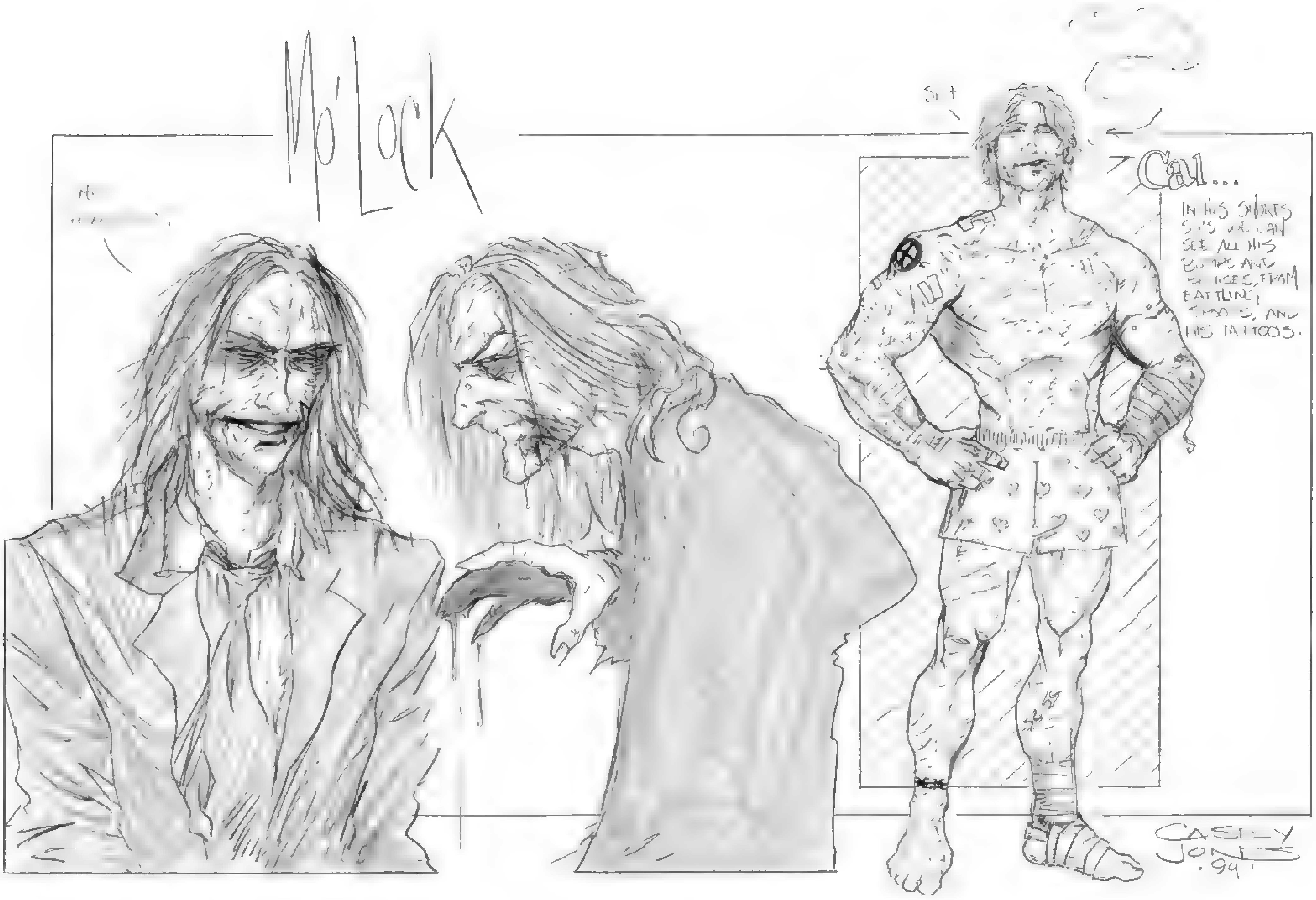

...AND SOME PEACE.
THE END

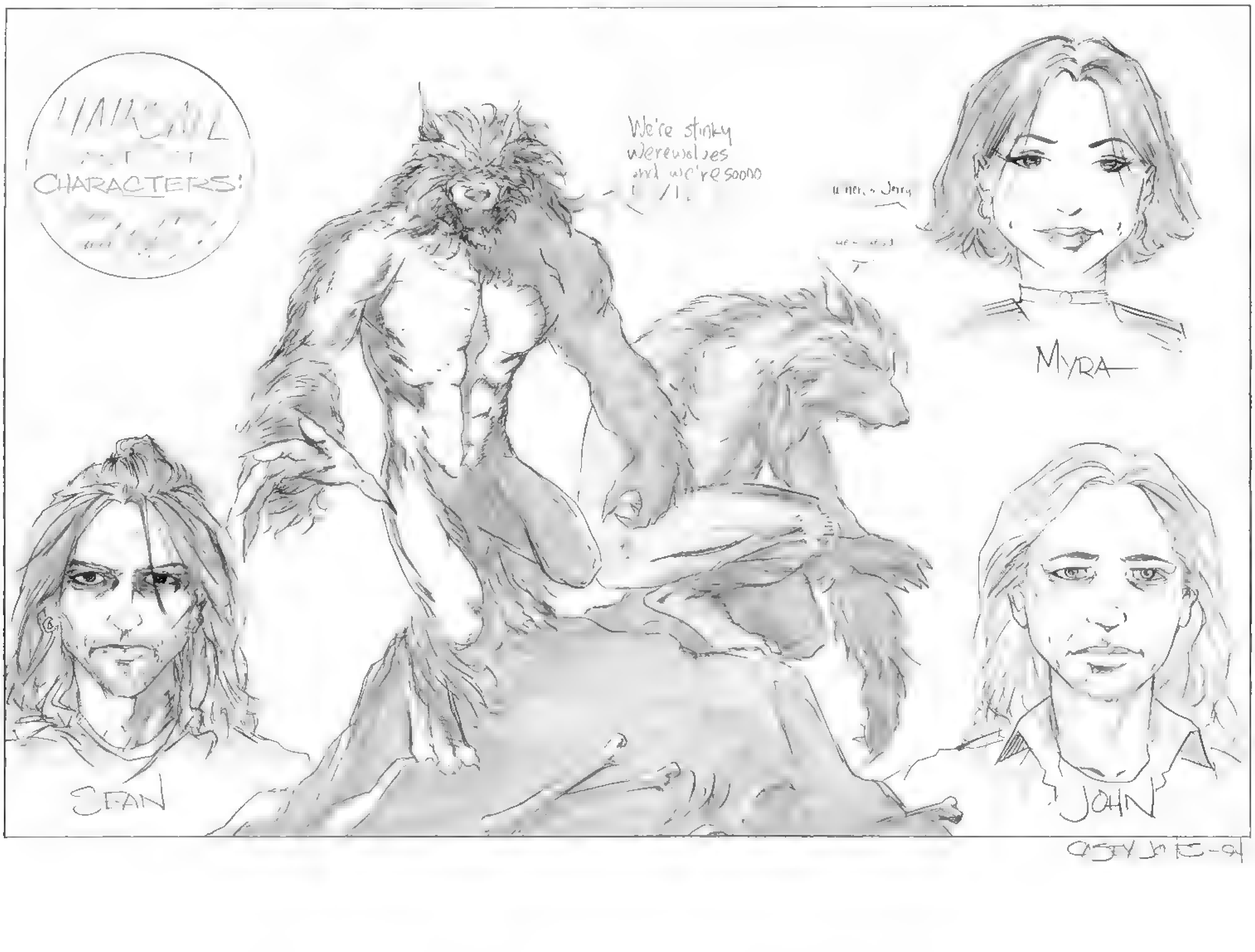

Cal McDonald
MONSTER
CAL
CASEY JONES 94

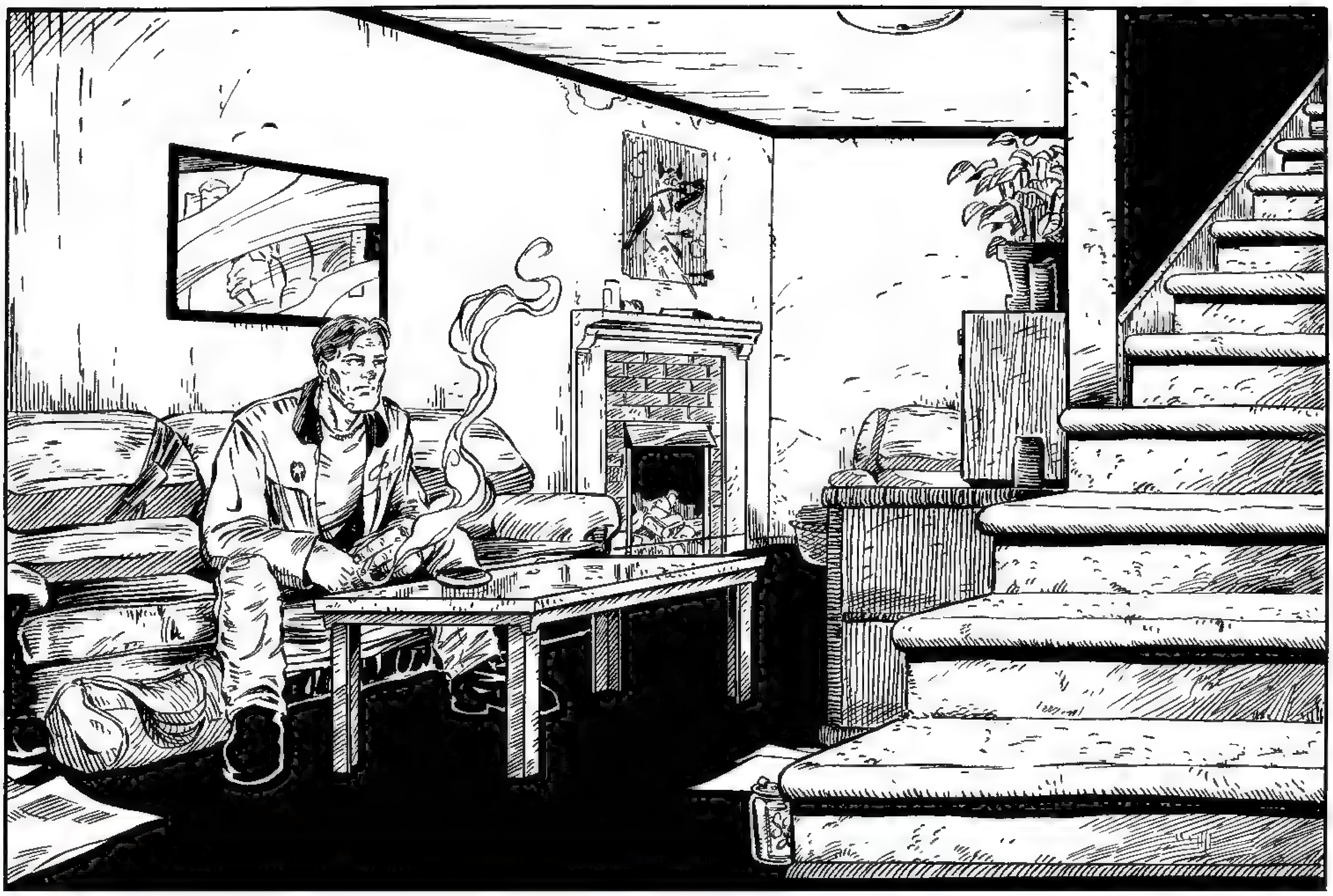
Hairball sketches by Casey Jones, 1994

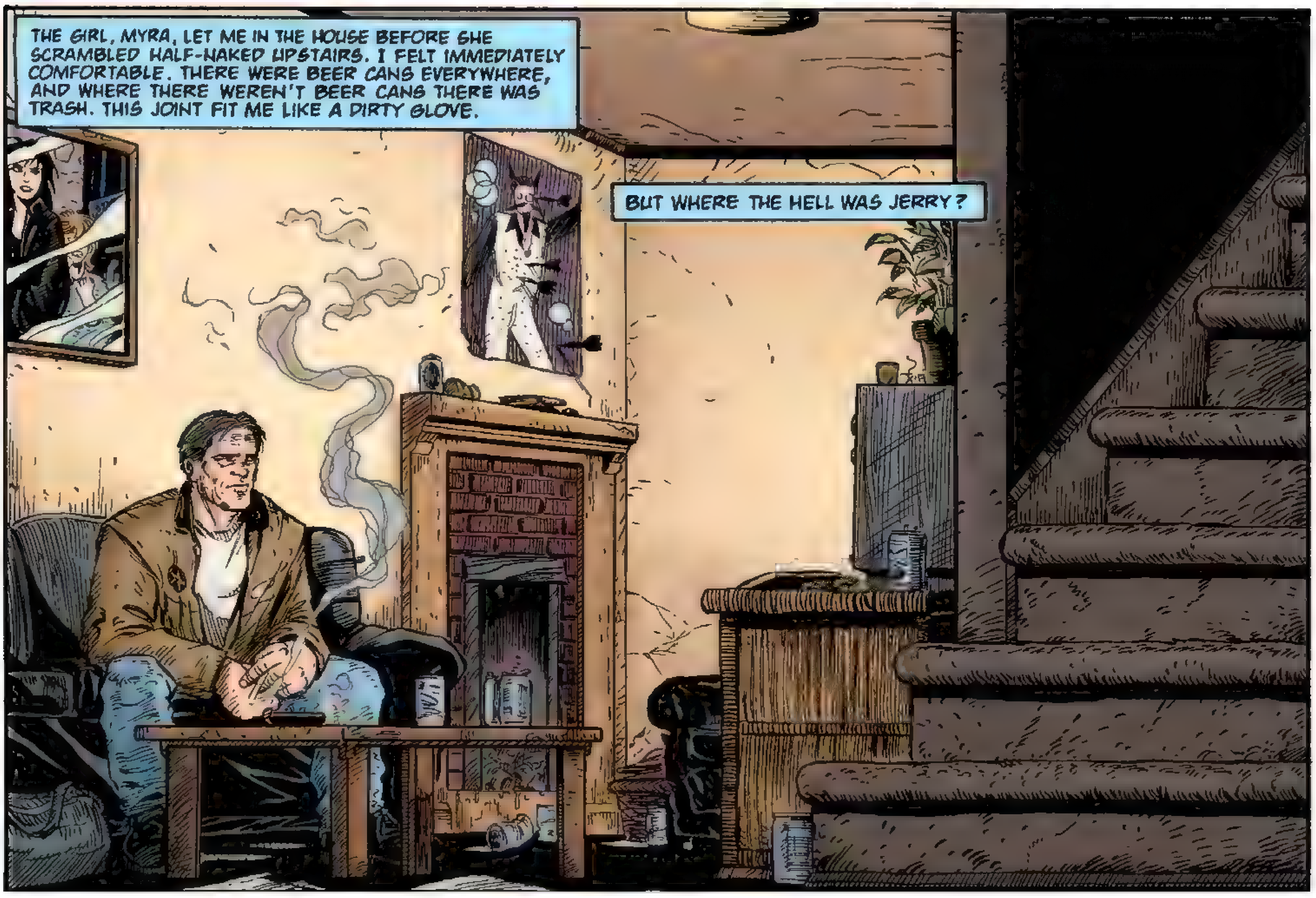

Cal

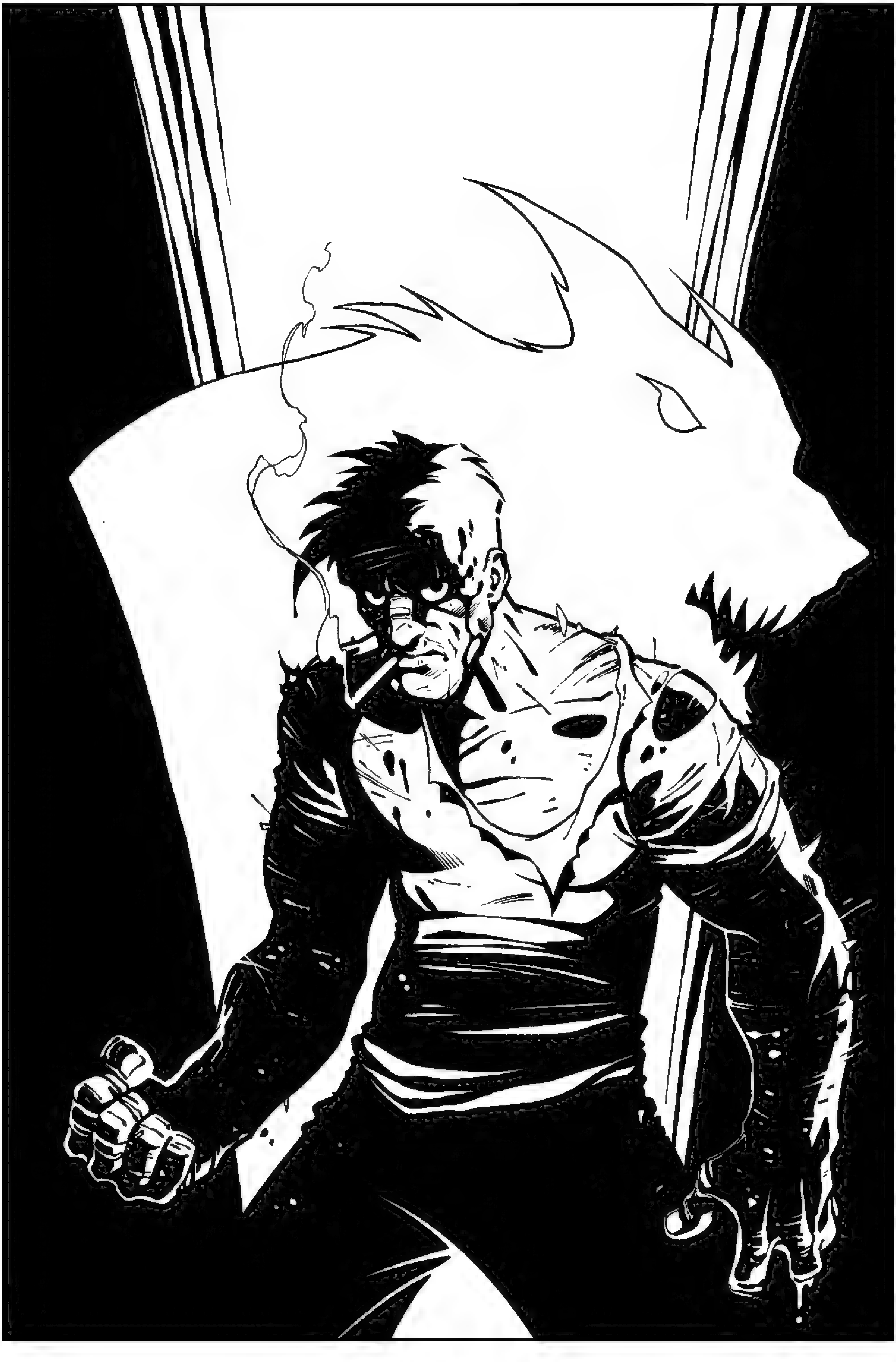

Mo'Lock


Mo'Lock
Cal...
IN HIS SHORTS SO WE CAN SEE ALL HIS BUMPS AND BRUISES, FROM BATTLING, AND HIS TATTOOS.
CASEY JONES '94

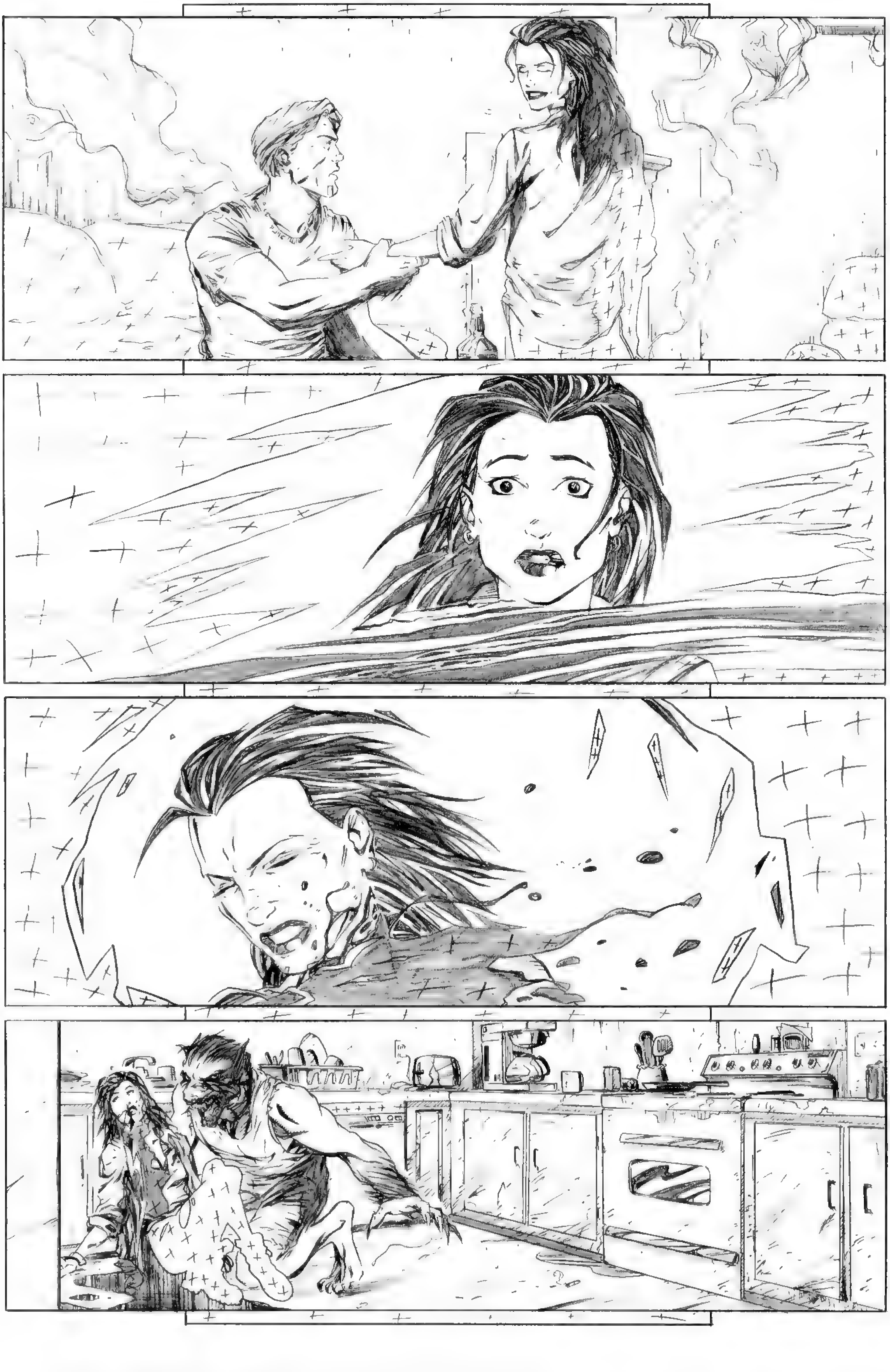

CHARACTERS!
We're stinky werewolves and we're soono
Jerry
MYRA
SEAN
JOHN
CASEY JONES-94



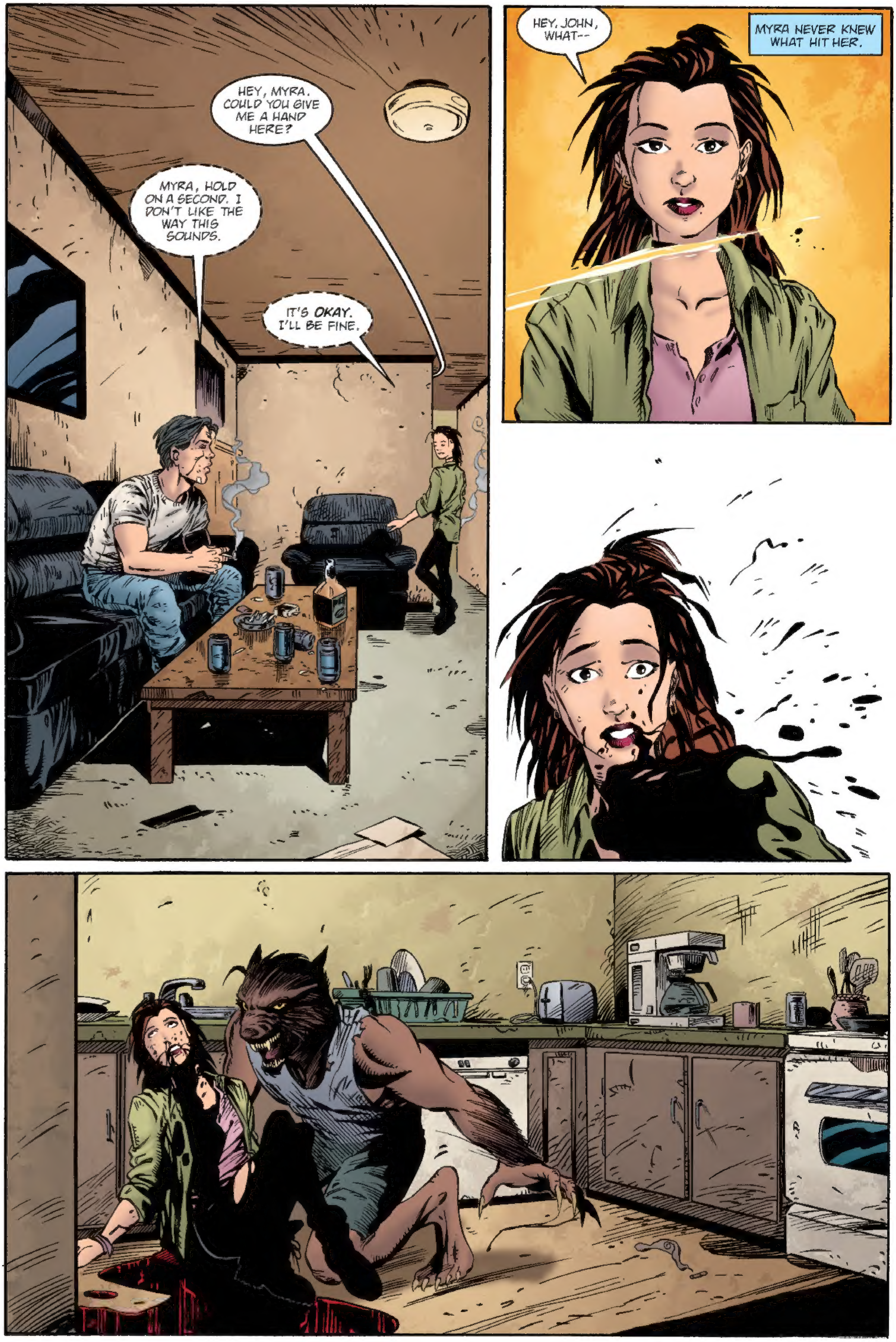

THE GIRL, MYRA, LET ME IN THE HOUSE BEFORE SHE SCRAMBLED HALF-NAKED UPSTAIRS. I FELT IMMEDIATELY COMFORTABLE. THERE WERE BEER CANS EVERYWHERE, AND WHERE THERE WEREN'T BEER CANS THERE WAS TRASH. THIS JOINT FIT ME LIKE A DIRTY GLOVE.
BUT WHERE THE HELL WAS JERRY?



Pinup by Casey Jones



BRUCE — PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SPLATTER INK EVERYWHERE FOR BLOOD EFFECT IN PANELS 2 & 3


HEY, MYRA. COULD YOU GIVE ME A HAND HERE?
MYRA, HOLD ON A SECOND. I DON'T LIKE THE WAY THIS SOUNDS.
IT'S *OKAY*. I'LL BE FINE.
HEY, JOHN, WHAT--
MYRA NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT HER.

STEVE NILES

Steve Niles writes comics, novels, and films. He is one of the writers responsible for bringing horror comics back to prominence. Niles got his start in the industry when he formed his own publishing company, Arcane Comix, where he published, edited, and adapted several comics and anthologies for Eclipse Comics. His adaptations include works by Clive Barker, Richard Matheson, and Harlan Ellison. IDW released hardcover and softcover collections of Niles's adaptation of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*. In 2002, he wrote *30 Days of Night*, which was made into a major motion picture with *Spider-Man*'s Sam Raimi producing and David Slade directing. Niles had a part in writing the screenplay. Steve resides in Los Angeles in his bachelor pad with five cats, two dogs, a tortoise, and the love of his life. While there's no crawlspace, there is a questionable closet in one corner, and no one is quite sure what is hidden in there . . . but we have an idea.

SteveNiles.com

KYLE HOTZ

While still in the final year of earning his fine-arts degree, Kyle Hotz was already working full time as a comic-book illustrator on the horror anthology *Slash*, where the first writer he ever worked with was Brian Azzarello. Immediately after finishing school, Kyle was asked to work on the title *The Night Man* for Malibu Comics. As his reputation as an artist grew, Kyle illustrated titles for most of the major comic publishers, including Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, Image, and more. Some of the characters he's worked on include the Hulk, Spider-Man, the Punisher, Evil Ernie, Marvel's Zombie, and Captain America. In 2000, Kyle cocreated, with Brian Vaughan, the character the Hood for Marvel Comics and illustrated the character's first miniseries. *The Hood* was a sleeper hit and finally broke out in 2009, when the Hood became one of Marvel's most popular villains and Kyle was asked to return to the character for a five-issue story arc. Kyle has also cocreated and illustrated the graphic novel *Epilogue* with author Steve Niles, and cocreated and illustrated *The Agency* with Paul Jenkins. Along the way Kyle wrote and illustrated the creator-owned graphic novel *Mosaic* and wrote and illustrated *The Zombie* for Marvel. The purest version of Kyle's art is the series he cocreated and draws with Eric Powell, *Billy the Kid's Old Timey Oddities*. Kyle is currently working on *Heroes for Hire* for Marvel and the third *Billy the Kid* miniseries. He lives and works in Ohio with his family and extra-chubby pug dog, Cujo, and still wants to draw Batman.

CASEY JONES

Casey met Cal McDonald nearly twenty years ago when he was just a teenager. He was totally unprepared for Cal's "lifestyle" and how much work was involved with being his friend. After being out of touch for a while, Casey has stopped avoiding Cal's phone calls and is cautiously making plans to hang out sometime soon.

steve niles

CRIMINAL MACABRE™

the cal mcdonald mysteries

OMNIBUS

VOLUME 2

Cal McDonald, one of the most unconventional detectives of all time, and his undead partner Mo'Lock face an army of new and evil monsters in this collection featuring artwork by Kyle Hotz (*Billy the Kid's Old Timey Oddities*), Nick Stakal (*Silent Hill*), and Casey Jones (*X-Men*)! This volume collects *Criminal Macabre* Volumes 4–6, the one-shot story *Feat of Clay*, "The Creepy Tree" and "The Trouble with Brains" from *MySpace Dark Horse Presents*, and "Hairball" from *Dark Horse Presents* featured in color for the first time!

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ZONE